



LESSONS
FROM THE
LIFE OF DANIEL

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1. God's Purpose Concerning Israel

EVERY temporal and every spiritual advantage was given to the Jewish nation, the Lord's chosen people. God himself wrought for them, multiplying them in Egypt, delivering them from bondage, and leading them to the land of Canaan, their promised inheritance.

To the Jewish nation were committed the oracles of God, which were to be as a wall of protection round about them. As His chosen people, the Israelites were to show to the nations of the earth that the law of God's kingdom is holy and just and good. By obedience to this law they were to be brought under the control of their Creator and Redeemer, and made a pure, wise people, whose joy it would be to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God.

Never were the Israelites to depart from the instruction given them by Christ from the pillar of cloud. God declared that if His people would live by the pure, unselfish principles of His law, and thus fulfill His purpose for them, He would honor them before all the world. He said:

Deuteronomy 12

²⁸ Observe and hear all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you forever, when you do that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God.

²⁹ When the Lord your God shall cut off the nations from before you, whither you go to possess them, and you succeed them, and dwell in their land;

³⁰ Take heed to yourself that you be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before you; and that you inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods?...

³¹ ...for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.

³² What thing so ever I command you, observe to do it: you shall not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Leviticus 20

²² You shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spew you not out.

²³ And you shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them.

²⁴ But I have said unto you, You shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that flows with milk and honey: I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people.

God specified also the sure result of a disregard for His commandments. He declared:

Leviticus 26

¹⁴ If you will not harken unto me, and will not do all these commandments;

¹⁶ I also will do this unto you; I will...

¹⁷ ...set my face against you, and you shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you...

³¹ And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors.

³² And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.

³³ And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

³⁸ And you shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.

With these solemn warnings foretelling the results of disobedience, were given words of encouragement. God declared that even if His people should fail of fulfilling His purpose, He would not forsake them utterly. He said:

Leviticus 26

⁴⁰ If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;

⁴¹ And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:

⁴² Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

⁴⁴ ...when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them; to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God.

⁴⁵ But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the Lord.

These are some of the prophecies concerning Israel. The special advantages and privileges that God's chosen people enjoyed, made their responsibility greater than that of any other people.

By holiness of life, by steadfast loyalty, by faithfulness in the payment of tithes and offerings, by cheerful, devoted service, they were to acknowledge God's sovereignty, and testify in word and deed that they were made better by the favors bestowed upon them.

Thus they were to be a light to the surrounding nations, revealing to idolatrous peoples the true God and the glory of His character.



The Israelites taken into Babylonian Captivity
(Pleasant Pages and Bible Pictures, 1869)

2. Causes of the Babylonish Captivity

Daniel 1

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

WE ALSO read of other invasions by the Babylonians a few years afterward, the first of which was in the reign of Jehoiachin the son of Jehoiakim:

2 Kings 24

¹⁰ Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.

¹¹ And Nebuchadnezzar...

¹⁴ ...carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.

¹⁵ And he carried away Jehoiachin...into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

¹⁷ The king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸ Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem...

¹⁹ And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

²⁰ For through the anger of the Lord it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until He had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

2 Kings 25

¹ And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign...that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about.

² And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

⁴ And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night...and the king went the way toward the plain.

⁵ And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him.

⁶ So they took the king, and...carried him to Babylon.

⁸ In...the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem.

⁹ And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

¹⁰ And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

¹¹ Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carry away.

¹² But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.

²¹ ...So Judah was carried away out of their land.

The prophet Nehemiah presents the evil-doings of the Jewish nation as the cause of their calamities. After recounting the Lord's dealings with them, and their oft-repeated rebellion, he declares:

Nehemiah 9

²⁶ They were disobedient, and rebelled against you, and cast your law behind their backs, and slew your prophets which testified against them to turn them to you, and they wrought great provocations.

²⁷ Therefore you delivered them into the hand of their enemies.

God made Zion His holy habitation, the joy of the whole earth. But notwithstanding His goodness to His chosen peo-

ple, they forgot Him, and wandered into idolatry. Before their dispersion, repeated warnings came to them; but:

Zechariah 7

¹¹ They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

¹² Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent in His Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.

If men refuse to receive the admonitions of the Lord, if they persist in walking contrary to His instruction, He cannot deliver them from the sure consequences of their own course. If they place themselves in opposition to His purposes, and forsake the principles of heaven, He permits their enemies to humble them.

Through Huldah the prophetess, God declared concerning the unrepentant nation:

2 Kings 22

¹⁷ Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place [Jerusalem] and shall not be quenched.

And what was the result?

Zechariah 7

¹² ...therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.

¹³ Therefore it is come to pass, that as He cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, says the Lord of hosts:

¹⁴ But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

The children of Israel were taken captive to Babylon be-

cause they separated from God; they did not maintain His principles unadulterated with the sentiments of the nations around them. The people who should have been a light amid the surrounding darkness, disregarded the word of the Lord. They lived for themselves, and neglected to do the special work God had appointed them. And because of their failure to fulfill His purpose, He permitted them to be humbled by an idolatrous nation.

The Lord could not work for the prosperity of His people, He could not fulfill His covenant with them, while they were untrue to the principles He had given them to maintain, that they might be kept from the methods and practices of the nations that dishonored Him.

By their spirit and works the children of Israel misrepresented the righteousness of God's character, and the Lord allowed the Babylonians to take them captive. He left His people to their ways; and in the calamities that befell them the innocent suffered with the guilty.

3. Early Training

AMONG the children of Israel who were taken as captives to Babylon at the beginning of the seventy years' captivity, were Christian patriots, young men who were as true as steel to principle, who would not be corrupted by selfishness, who would honor God at the loss of all things.

Upon these loyal and true young men the Lord looked with great pleasure. They had to suffer with the guilty, but in the providence of God this captivity was the means of bringing them to the front. Their example of untarnished integrity, while captives in Babylon, shines with heavenly luster.

Among those who remained true to God after reaching the land of their captivity, the prophet Daniel and his three companions are illustrious examples of what even youth may become when united with the God of wisdom. A brief account of the life of these four Hebrews is left on record for the encouragement of those who are called upon to endure trial and temptation.

After his return from the conquest of the Israelites, King Nebuchadnezzar:

Daniel 1

³ ...spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

⁴ Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

⁵ And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

⁶ Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel,

Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

⁷ Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

It was not their own pride or ambition that had brought these young men into the king's court, into companionship with those who neither knew nor feared the true God. They were captives in a strange land, placed there by Infinite Wisdom. Separated from home influences and sacred associations, they sought to acquit themselves creditably, for the honor of their downtrodden people, and for the glory of Him whose servants they were.

These youth had received a right education in early life, and now they honored the instructors of their childhood. With their habits of self-denial were united earnestness of purpose, diligence, and steadfastness.

The education which these four youth had received in Judea was not after the order of the worldly schools, but according to the purpose and plan of God. The school in which they were educated was not after the order of the schools existing before the destruction of the old world by a flood,—schools in which infidel sentiments prevailed, and in which nature was acknowledged and worshiped above the God of nature. These youth were brought up in homes where they were taught the fear of the Lord.

Daniel's parents trained him in his childhood to habits of strict temperance. They taught him that in every act he must conform to nature's laws; that his eating and drinking had a direct influence upon his physical, mental, and moral nature; that he was accountable to God for all his capabilities; and that by no unwise course should he dwarf or enfeeble his powers. As the result of this teaching, God's law was exalted in his mind and revered in his heart.

And such an early education was to Daniel and his three companions the means of their preservation. The lessons learned in their earliest years led them to determine to avoid being corrupted in the courts of Babylon. The truth was truth to them. Its principles were stamped upon their hearts. They understood that:

Romans 10

¹⁰ With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The first and great commandment,

Luke 10

²⁷ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,

was truth to them, and it must be obeyed.

In the schools established under God's direction, the fear of the Lord was the foundation of all true education. The knowledge of God had been handed down from generation to generation. In Abel, whom Cain killed, and afterward in Enoch, Seth, Methuselah, Noah, and many others, the Lord had faithful witnesses, just men, who kept His fear before their generation. Their memories were not feeble and treacherous. They had received the words of instruction from Adam, and these they repeated to their children and their children's children. Much important history and truth was expressed in song.

Daniel and his companions were familiar with the lives of Abel, Seth, Enoch, and Noah. They cherished the truths that had been passed down from generation to generation. The image of God was engraved upon the heart.

When surrounded by an atmosphere of evil, these youth remained uncorrupted. No power or influence could sway them from the principles they had learned in early life by a study of God's word and works.

Young men and young women, study the history of Daniel

and his companions. Their lives should inspire you with a determination to be true to God. You must be either loyal or disloyal to Him.

Christian integrity is strengthened by serving the Lord faithfully. Uplift the standard on which is inscribed,

Revelation 14

¹² The commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Make no compromise with evil. The line of demarcation between the obedient and the disobedient must be plain and distinct. Firmly determine to do the Lord's will at all times and in all places.

4. Daniel's Temperance Principles

DANIEL early gave promise of the remarkable ability developed in later years. He and his three companions who were selected to serve in the court of the king, were of princely birth, and are described as:

Daniel 1

⁴ Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them.

Perceiving the superior talents of these youthful captives, King Nebuchadnezzar determined to prepare them to fill important positions in his kingdom. That they might be fully qualified for their life at court, according to Oriental custom, they were to be taught the language of the Chaldeans, and to be subjected for three years to a thorough course of both physical and intellectual discipline.

The youth in this school of training were not only to be admitted to the royal palace, but it was provided that they should eat of the food, and drink of the wine, which came from the king's table. In all this the king thought that he was not only showing them great honor, but securing for them the best physical and mental development.

In the food provided for the king's table were swine's flesh and other meats which were pronounced unclean by the law given through Moses, and which the Hebrews had been expressly forbidden to eat. Here Daniel was brought to a severe test. Should he adhere to the divine teaching, offend the king, and probably lose not only his position but his life? or should he disregard the commandment of the Lord, and retain the favor of the king, thus securing great intellectual advantages and the most flattering worldly prospects?

Daniel could have argued that, dependent as he was on the king's favor, and subject to his power, there was no other

course for him to pursue than to eat of the king's meat and to drink of his wine. But Daniel and his fellows counseled together. They considered how their physical and mental powers would be affected by the use of wine. The wine, they decided, was a snare.

They were acquainted with the history of Nadab and Abihu, the record of whose intemperance had been preserved in the parchments of the Pentateuch. They knew that by the constant use of wine these men had become addicted to the liquor habit, and that they had confused their senses by drinking just before engaging in the sacred service of the sanctuary. In their brain-benumbed state, not being able to discern the difference between the sacred and the common, they had put common fire upon their censers, instead of the sacred fire of the Lord's kindling, and for this sin they had been struck dead.

A second consideration with these youthful captives was the fact that the king, before eating, always asked the blessing of his gods upon the food. A portion of the food, and also of the wine, from his table was set apart as an offering to the false gods whom he worshiped. According to the religious ideas of the day, this act consecrated the whole to the heathen gods.

Daniel and his three brethren thought that even if they should not actually partake of the king's bounties, a mere pretense of eating the food or drinking the wine, where such idolatry was practiced, would be a denial of their faith. To do this would indeed be to implicate themselves with heathenism, and to dishonor the principles of the law of God.

Daniel did not long hesitate. He decided to stand firm in his integrity, let the result be what it might.

Daniel 1

⁸ [He] purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.

In this decision there was much involved. The Hebrew captives were regarded as slaves, but Daniel and his companions were particularly favored because of their apparent intelligence and their comeliness of person. In making their decision they did not act presumptuously, but revealed a firm love for truth and righteousness. They did not choose to be singular, but they must be, else they would ruin their own characters, set a wrong example for others, and dishonor God.

Among professed Christians today there are many who would decide that Daniel was too particular, and would pronounce him narrow and bigoted. They regard the matter of eating and drinking as of too little consequence to require such a decided choice,—one involving the probable sacrifice of every earthly advantage.

But in the day of judgment those who reason thus will find that they turned from God's express requirements, and set up their own opinion as a standard of right and wrong. They will find that what seemed to them unimportant was not so regarded by God.

His requirements should be sacredly obeyed. Those who accept and obey one of His precepts because it is convenient to do so, while they reject another because its observance would require a sacrifice, lower the standard of right, and by their example lead others to regard lightly His holy law. A "Thus says the Lord" is to be our rule in all things.

Daniel was subjected to temptations as severe as any that can assail the youth of today; yet he was true to the religious instruction received in early life. He was surrounded with influences calculated to subvert those who would vacillate between principle and inclination; yet the word of God presents him as a faultless character. Daniel dared not trust to his own moral power. Prayer was to him a necessity. He made God his strength, and in all the transactions of his life, the fear of the Lord was before him.

Daniel possessed the grace of genuine meekness. He was true, firm, and noble. He sought to live in peace with all, but wherever principle was involved, he was as unbending as the lofty cedar. In everything that did not come in collision with his allegiance to God, he was respectful and obedient to those who had authority over him; but he had so high a sense of the claims of God that the requirements of earthly rulers were held subordinate. By no selfish consideration could he be induced to swerve from his duty.

The character of Daniel is presented to the world as a striking example of what God's grace can make of men fallen by nature and corrupted by sin. The record of his noble, self-denying life is an encouragement to our common humanity. From it we may gather strength nobly to resist temptation, and firmly, and in the grace of meekness, to stand for the right under the severest trial.

Daniel might have found a plausible excuse to depart from his strictly temperate habits; but the approval of God was dearer to him than the favor of the most powerful earthly potentate,—dearer even than life itself.

Having by his courteous conduct obtained favor with Melzar, the officer in charge of the Hebrew youth, Daniel made a request that they might not eat of the king's meat, or drink of his wine. Melzar feared that by complying with this request, he might incur the displeasure of the king; and thus endanger his own life.

Like many at the present day, he thought that an abstemious diet would render these youth pale and sickly in appearance, and deficient in muscular strength, while the luxurious food from the king's table would make them ruddy and beautiful, and would promote physical and mental activity.

Daniel requested that the matter be decided by a ten days' trial, the Hebrew youth during this time being supplied with simple food, while their companions ate of the king's dainties.

The request was granted, and Daniel felt assured that he had gained his case. Although but a youth, he had seen the injurious effects of wine and luxurious living upon physical and mental health.

At the end of the ten days the result was found to be quite the opposite of Melzar's expectations. Not only in personal appearance, but in physical activity and mental vigor, those who had been temperate in their habits showed a marked superiority over their companions who had indulged appetite. As a result of this trial, Daniel and his associates were permitted to continue their simple diet during the whole course of their training for the duties of the kingdom.

The Lord regarded with approval the firmness and self-denial of these Hebrew youth, and His blessing attended them.

Daniel 1

¹⁷ As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

At the expiration of the three years of training, when their ability and acquirements were tested by the king,

¹⁹ [he] found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

²⁰ And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

The life of Daniel is an inspired illustration of what constitutes a sanctified character. It presents a lesson for all, and especially for the young. A strict compliance with the requirements of God is beneficial to the health of the body and the mind. In order to reach the highest standard of moral and intellectual attainments, it is necessary to seek wisdom and strength from God, and to observe strict temperance in all the habits of life.

In the experience of Daniel and his companions we have an instance of the triumph of principle over temptation to indulge the appetite. It shows us that through religious principle young men may triumph over the lusts of the flesh, and remain true to God's requirements, even though it costs them a great sacrifice.

What if Daniel and his companions had made a compromise with those heathen officers, and had yielded to the pressure of the occasion, by eating and drinking as was customary with the Babylonians? That single instance of departure from principle would have weakened their sense of right and their abhorrence of wrong. Indulgence of appetite would have involved the sacrifice of physical vigor, clearness of intellect, and spiritual power. One wrong step would probably have led to others, until, their connection with Heaven being severed, they would have been swept away by temptation.

God has said,

1 Samuel 2

³⁰ ...them that honor me I will honor.

While Daniel clung to his God with unwavering trust, the spirit of prophetic power came upon him. While he was instructed of man in the duties of court life, he was taught of God to read the mysteries of future ages, and to present to coming generations, through figures and similitudes, the wonderful things that would come to pass in the last days.

5. With Full Purpose of Heart

FROM age to age the heroes of faith have been marked by their fidelity to God; and they have been brought conspicuously before the world that their light might shine to those in darkness.

Daniel and his three companions are illustrious examples of Christian heroism and devotion to principle. A brief account of the life of these four Hebrews is left on record for the encouragement of those who are brought into temptation and trial. From their experience in the court of Babylon, we may learn what God will do for those who serve Him with full purpose of heart.

In the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem,

2 Kings 24

²⁴ And he carried away all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.

After his return from the conquest of the Israelites, Nebuchadnezzar...

Daniel 1

³ ...spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

⁴ Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

Among those chosen from the captives of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

Daniel 1

⁷ Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

The Babylonian officer had an object in thus changing the names of the Hebrew youth. Anciently the name of a child stood for his character, and the names given to these children were characteristic of what it was expected they would become. They were young in years, and this change in their names it was believed would make an impression on their minds. In a little while, it was hoped, their former religion would be forgotten, and they would become in character and purpose like the Chaldean youth about them.

That they might be fully prepared for their life at court, according to Oriental custom, these youth were to be taught the learning of the Chaldeans, and for three years they were to be subjected to a thorough course of physical and intellectual discipline. They were not only to be admitted to the royal palace, but it was also provided that they should eat of the meat and drink of the wine that came from the king's table.

⁵ And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

In all this the king thought that he was showing them great honor, and was securing for them the best physical and mental development.

⁸ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.

In purposing that he would not eat the food that the king had provided, Daniel did not desire to be singular; but he was determined to be true to God. As a true Hebrew, he could not

eat the meat nor drink the wine. In the food provided for the king's table, were swine's flesh and other foods which were proclaimed unclean by the law given to Moses.

Again, a portion of the food, and also of the wine, was set apart as an offering to the false gods of Babylon. According to the religious ideas of the day, this act consecrated the whole to the heathen gods.

Daniel and his three brethren thought that if they should not actually partake of the king's bounty, a mere pretense of eating the food and drinking the wine, where such idolatry was practiced, would be a denial of their faith. To do this would be to implicate themselves with heathenism, and to dishonor the law of God.

Daniel and his companions might have taken the position that because their food and drink was of the king's appointment, it was their duty to partake of it. But they did not do this. As they were brought to the test, they placed themselves fully on the side of truth and righteousness. By earnest prayer and study of the Scriptures, they were prepared to act intelligently in the matter. Flesh meat had not composed their diet in the past, and they determined that it should not come into their diet in the future.

From the fate of the sons of Aaron, they knew that the use of wine would confuse their senses, that the indulgence of appetite would becloud their powers of discernment; and as wine had been prohibited to all who should engage in the service of God, they resolved that they would not partake of it. They would not defile themselves with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.

The faithful youth knew not what would be the result of their decision; but though they realized that it might cost them their lives, they resolved to keep the path of strict temperance in the courts of the licentious city of Babylon.

Daniel and his companions are illustrations of what the young men of today can be. Earnest, whole-souled, these youth would be true to principle at any cost. During the early years of his captivity, Daniel was passing through an ordeal that was to familiarize him with courtly grandeur, with hypocrisy, and with paganism. A strange school indeed to fit him for a life of sobriety, industry, and faithfulness! And yet he lived uncorrupted by this atmosphere of evil.

To those who will do as these youth did,—close the door to temptation, deny appetite, and place themselves in right relation to God,—the Lord will manifest himself. It is the privilege of the youth today to have principles so firm that the most powerful temptations will not draw them from their allegiance. The company they keep, the principles they adopt, the habits they form, will settle the question of their usefulness in this life, and of their future eternal interests, with a certainty that is infallible.

There is also a lesson for us to learn in the demand the king of Babylon made for perfection in the youth who should stand in his courts. They must be without blemish, well favored, skilful in wisdom, cunning in knowledge, and understanding science.

If an idolatrous king should demand such excellence in those who were to stand before him, should not those who have a knowledge of the true God reach perfection of character and capability in His service?

Those who expect one day to stand before the throne of the God of gods and Lord of kings, should live each day in such a way that the approval of God can rest upon them. They should seek daily to remove the blemishes in character that lead to sin, and bring into their lives the perfection of character that all must reveal who have a part in the kingdom of heaven.

Character will always be tested. If Christ dwells in us, day

by day and year by year, we shall grow into a noble heroism. This is our allotted task, but it cannot be accomplished without help from Jesus, without resolute decision, unwavering purpose, continual watchfulness, and unceasing prayer.

Each has a personal battle to fight; each must win his way through struggles and discouragements. Those who decline the struggle, lose the strength and joy of victory. No one, not even God, can make our characters noble or our lives useful unless we make the effort necessary on our part. We must put features of beauty into our lives. We must seek to expel the unlovely traits, while God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

To carry out his purpose not to defile himself with the king's food, Daniel made request of the prince of the eunuchs for a simpler diet.

Daniel 1

⁹ Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

This officer saw in Daniel good traits of character. He saw that he was striving to be kind and helpful, that his words were respectful and courteous, and his manner possessed the grace of modesty and meekness. It was the good behavior of the youth that gained for him the favor and love of the prince.

But the prince of the eunuchs hesitated to grant the request of Daniel, fearing that such rigid abstinence as he proposed would cause the Hebrews to become less ruddy in health than those who ate of the king's dainties. He said to Daniel,

¹⁰ I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall you make me endanger my head to the king.

But it was not the luxuries of the king that would give to these youth a clear countenance and bright eye. It was the

consciousness of having the approval of God. And Daniel knew that if he and his companions were permitted to adopt a simple diet, by the time they were called to appear before the king, the advantages of health reform would be apparent in their physical health. Daniel pleaded for a ten days' trial:

Daniel 1

¹² Prove your servants, I beseech you, ten days, and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

¹³ Then let our countenances be looked upon before you, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as you see, deal with your servants.

¹⁴ So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

When they preferred their request, the Hebrew youth knew the seriousness of their position, and by earnest prayer they braced themselves for duty and for trial. Severe criticism was passed upon them by their companions; they had to meet ridicule and abuse; but sneers could not weaken their piety.

With watchfulness and prayer they guarded every avenue of temptation. They had learned the principles of true service. They were captives, lonely, and in peril; but they were in possession of a treasure of priceless worth,—unbending integrity. They feared to do wrong.

¹⁵ And at the end of the ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

¹⁶ Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and of the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

The simple pulse and water, which they at first requested, was thereafter the food of Daniel and his companions.

From the experience of these Hebrew children, we can learn the precious lesson that the Lord watches over those who place themselves in right relation to Him and to His requirements. God regarded with approval the firmness and self-de-

nial of these youth, and His blessing attended them.

In Daniel and his companions we have an instance of the triumph of principles over temptation and indulgence of appetite. It shows us that through religious principles young men may triumph over the lusts of the flesh, and remain true to God's requirements, even though it costs them great sacrifice.

What young men and women need is Christian heroism. God's Word declares:

Proverbs 16

³² He that rules his spirit is better than he that takes a city.

To rule the spirit means to keep self under discipline. The youth must not suppose that they can go on living careless and indulgent lives, seeking no preparation for the kingdom of God, and yet in time of trial be able to stand firm for the truth. They need to seek earnestly to bring into their lives the perfection that is seen in the life of the Saviour, so that when Christ shall come, they will be prepared to enter in through the gates into the city of God.

God's abounding love and presence in the heart will give the power of self-control, and will mold and fashion the mind and character. The grace of Christ in the life will direct the aims and purposes and capabilities into channels that will give moral and spiritual power—power which the youth will not have to leave in this world, but which they can carry with them into the future life and retain through the eternal ages.



Daniel and his Companions refuse the King's Wine and Meat
(The Bible in Picture and Story, 1889)

6. A Warfare Against Intemperance

NO YOUNG MAN or young woman could be more sorely tempted than were Daniel and his companions. To these four Hebrew youth were apportioned wine and meat from the king's table. But they chose to be temperate. They saw that perils were on every side, and that if they resisted temptation, they must make most decided efforts on their part, and trust the results with God.

The youth who desire to stand as Daniel stood must exert their spiritual powers to the very utmost, cooperating with God, and trusting wholly in the strength that He has promised to all who come to Him in humble obedience.

There is a constant warfare to be maintained between virtue and vice. The discordant elements of the one, and the pure principles of the other, are at work striving for the mastery. Satan is approaching every soul with some form of temptation on the point of indulgence of appetite.

Intemperance is fearfully prevalent. Look where we will, we behold this evil fondly cherished. In spite of the efforts made to control it, intemperance is on the increase. We cannot be too earnest in seeking to hinder its progress, to raise the fallen, and to shield the weak from temptation.

With our feeble human hands we can do but little, but we have an unfailing Helper. We must not forget that the arm of Christ can reach to the very depths of human woe and degradation. He can give us help to conquer even the terrible demon of intemperance.

There is no class of persons capable of accomplishing more in the warfare against intemperance than are God-fearing youth. In this age the young men in our cities should unite as an army, firmly and decidedly to set themselves against every form of selfish, health-destroying indulgence. What a power they might be for good! How many they might save from be-

coming demoralized in the halls and gardens fitted up with music and other attractions to allure the youth!

Intemperance and profanity and licentiousness are sisters. Let every God-fearing youth gird on the armor and press to the front. Put your names on every temperance pledge presented. Thus you lend your influence in favor of signing the pledge, and induce others to sign it. Let no weak excuse deter you from taking this step. Work for the good of your own souls and for good of others.

The young men and young women who claim to believe the truth for this time can please Jesus only by uniting in an effort to meet the evils that have, with seductive influence, crept in upon society. They should do all they can to stay the tide of intemperance now spreading with demoralizing power over the land. Realizing that intemperance has open, avowed supporters, those who honor God take their position firmly against this tide of evil by which both men and women are being swiftly carried to perdition.

The followers of Jesus will never be ashamed to practice temperance in all things. Then why should any young man blush with shame to refuse the wine-cup or the foaming mug of beer? A refusal to indulge perverted appetite is an honorable act. To sin is unmanly; to indulge in injurious habits of eating and drinking is weak, cowardly, debased; but to deny perverted appetite is strong, brave, noble.

In the Babylonian court, Daniel was surrounded by allurements to sin, but by the help of Christ he maintained his integrity. He who cannot resist temptation, when every facility for overcoming has been placed within his reach, is not registered in the books of heaven as a man.

Dare to be a Daniel. Dare to stand alone. Have courage to do the right. A cowardly and silent reserve before evil associates, while you listen to their devices, makes you one with them.

2 Corinthians 6

¹⁷ Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean things; and I will receive you,

¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters.

At all times and on all occasions it requires moral courage to adhere to the principles of strict temperance. We may expect that by following such a course we shall surprise those who do not totally abstain from all stimulants; but how are we to carry forward the work of reform if we conform to the injurious habits and practices of those with whom we associate?

The holy intelligences of heaven watch the conflict going on between the tempter and the tempted. If the tempted turn from temptation, and in the strength of Jesus conquer, angels rejoice; for Satan has lost in the conflict.

In our behalf, Christ, when weakened and suffering on account of hunger, fought the battle against appetite, and conquered Satan. In the name and strength of Jesus every youth may conquer the enemy today on the point of perverted appetite.

My dear young friends, advance step by step, until all your habits shall be in harmony with the laws of life and health. He who overcame in the wilderness of temptation declares:

Revelation 3

²¹ To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.



Daniel and his Companions before Nebuchadnezzar
(The Child's Commentator, 1873)

7. The Reward of Temperance

DURING their three years of training, Daniel and his associates maintained their abstemious habits, their allegiance to God, and their constant dependence upon His power. When the time came for their abilities and acquirements to be tested by the king, they were examined with other candidates for the service of the kingdom.

Daniel 1

¹⁹ [But] among them all was found none like Daniel, Haniah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Their keen apprehension, their choice and exact language, their extensive knowledge, testified to the unimpaired strength and vigor of their mental power. Therefore they stood before the king.

²⁰ And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

God always honors the right. The most promising youths from all the lands subdued by the great conqueror had been gathered at Babylon, yet amid them all, the Hebrew captives were without a rival. The erect form, the firm, elastic step, the fair countenance, the undimmed senses, the untainted breath,—all these were insignia of the nobility with which nature honors those who are obedient to her laws.

The lesson here presented is one that we would do well to ponder. A strict compliance with the Bible requirements will be a blessing both to body and soul. The fruit of the Spirit is not only love, joy, and peace, but temperance also. We are enjoined not to defile our bodies; for they are the temples of the Holy Spirit.

The Hebrew captives were men of like passions with ourselves. Amid the seductive influences of the luxurious courts

of Babylon, they stood firm. The youth of today are surrounded with allurements to self-indulgence. Especially in our large cities, every form of sensual gratification is made easy and inviting. Those who, like Daniel, refuse to defile themselves, will reap the reward of temperate habits. With their greater physical stamina and increased power of endurance, they have a bank of deposit upon which to draw in case of emergency.

Right physical habits promote mental superiority. Intellectual power, physical stamina, and length of life depend upon immutable laws. Nature's God will not interfere to preserve men from the consequences of violating nature's requirements. He who strives for the mastery must be temperate in all things. Daniel's clearness of mind and firmness of purpose, his power in acquiring knowledge and in resisting temptation, were due in a great degree to the plainness of his diet, in connection with his life of prayer.

There is much sterling truth in the adage, "Every man is the architect of his own fortune." While parents are responsible for the stamp of character, as well as for the education and training, of their sons and daughters, it is still true that our position and usefulness in the world depend, to a great degree, upon our own course of action.

Daniel and his companions enjoyed the benefits of correct training and education in early life, but these advantages alone would not have made them what they were. The time came when they must act for themselves,—when their future depended upon their own course. Then they decided to be true to the lessons given them in childhood. The fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, was the foundation of their greatness.

The history of Daniel and his youthful companions has been recorded on the pages of the inspired word, for the benefit of the youth of all succeeding ages. Through the record of their

fidelity to the principles of temperance, God is speaking today to young men and young women, bidding them gather up the precious rays of light He has given on the subject of Christian temperance, and place themselves in right relation to the laws of health.

There is now need of men who, like Daniel, will do and dare. A pure heart and a strong, fearless hand, are wanted in the world today. God designed that man should be constantly improving, daily reaching a higher point in the scale of excellence. He will help us, if we seek to help ourselves. Our hope of happiness in two worlds depends upon our improvement in one. At every point we should be guarded against the first approach to intemperance.

Dear youth, God calls upon you to do a work which through His grace you can do.

Romans 12

¹ Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Stand forth in your God-given manhood and womanhood. Show a purity of tastes, appetite and habits that bears comparison with Daniel's God will reward you with calm nerves, a clear brain, an unimpaired judgment, keen perceptions. The youth of today whose principles are firm and unwavering, will be blessed with health of body, mind, and soul.



Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar the Interpretation of his Dream
(Simple Bible Stories No. 2, 1891)

8. Them That Honor Me, I Will Honor

Daniel 1

¹⁷ As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

¹⁸ Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁹ And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

²⁰ And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

GOD always honors the right. The most promising youth from all the lands subdued by the great conqueror had been gathered at Babylon; yet among them all, the Hebrew captives were without a rival. The erect form, the elastic step, the fair countenance, the undimmed senses, the untainted breath,—all were so many certificates of good habits, insignia of the nobility with which nature honors those who are obedient to her laws.

During the past three years the youthful Hebrews had been gaining other wisdom than the learning of the Chaldeans; God had been giving them a knowledge of himself. They had placed themselves in right relation to God, and He could trust them with a deep knowledge of eternal truths.

The habits and understanding of the youth who were not instructed by God were in accord with the knowledge that comes from idolatrous practices, and that leaves God out of its reckoning. Daniel and his companions, from the first of their experience in the king's court, were gaining a clearer comprehension, a sounder and more accurate judgment, than all the wise men of the kingdom of Babylon. They placed themselves

where God could bless them. They followed rules of life that would give them strength of intellect and would gain for them the greatest possible benefit from the study of God's Word.

While faithful to his duties in the king's court, Daniel so faithfully maintained his loyalty to God, that God could honor him as His messenger to the Babylonian monarch. It was to Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar, unable to get help from his wise men, turned for an account of his forgotten dream, and an interpretation of it.

Daniel and his companions sought the Lord, and to Daniel was revealed the dream and its meaning. And when he had related to the king the vision God had shown him, Nebuchadnezzar said,

Daniel 2

⁴⁷ Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing you could reveal this secret.

The history of Daniel and his companions has been recorded on the pages of the Inspired Word for the benefit of the youth in all succeeding ages. What men have done, men may do.

If the youth will make the unreserved surrender of the will that Daniel made, God will help them as He helped Daniel. If they will appreciate the opportunities He gives for growing in understanding of Him, He will give them wisdom and knowledge, and will fill their hearts with unselfishness. He will put into their minds thoughts that will inspire them with hope and courage as they seek to bring others under the sway of the Prince of Peace. They will have the cooperation of God and the angels. They will work out with carefulness the sum of their salvation, God working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure.

As Daniel studied the Word of God, his understanding be-

came ever clearer; and as he comprehended its ennobling principles, he purposed in his heart to form a character that God could approve. He could not foresee the result of his determination to be true to God in the courts of Babylon; but he resolved that even at the loss of all things, he would preserve his integrity. And the Lord fulfilled to him the word that he has pledged,

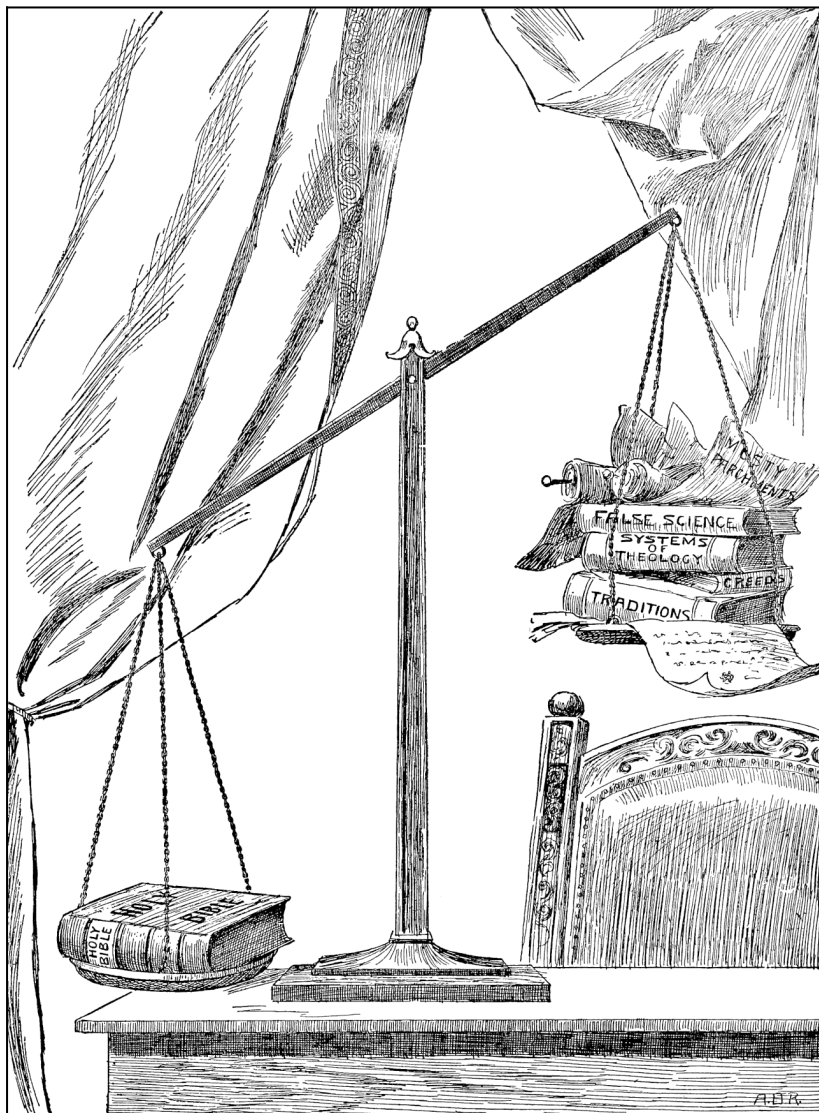
1 Samuel 2

³⁰ ...them that honor me I will honor.

There is wonderful encouragement in the story of Daniel for the youth who today are striving to gain knowledge. In His Word the Lord has left His children a divine instructor that will never disappoint those who seek its direction with a sincere heart. Its teachings will give a strength of character and mental development that no other book can impart.

Let the student make the Word of God the chief book of study, giving all other branches of learning a secondary place. And as the heart is opened to the entrance of the Word, light from the throne of God will shine into the soul.

The Word, cherished in the heart, will yield to the student a treasure of knowledge that is priceless. Its ennobling principles will stamp the character with honesty and truthfulness, temperance and integrity.



"Let the Student make the Word of God the Chief Book of Study."
(Charming Bible Stories, 1894)

9. Success in Education

FOR three years the promising young men whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, selected to be trained for filling responsible positions, studied to acquire...

Daniel 1

⁴ ...the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

¹⁸ At the end of the days [appointed for bringing them in]... then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁹ And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore they stood before the king.

True success in any line is not the result of chance, of accident, or of destiny; it is the outworking of God's providence, the reward of faith and discretion, of virtue and persevering labor. In acquiring the wisdom of the Babylonians, Daniel and his three companions were far more successful than their fellow students, but their learning did not come by chance; they obtained knowledge by the faithful use of their powers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

These youth placed themselves in connection with the Source of all wisdom. They made the knowledge of God the foundation of their education. Other young men had the same advantages, but they did not, like the faithful Hebrew youth, bend all their energies to seek wisdom,—the knowledge of God as revealed in His word and works. They did not unite with these youth in searching the portion of the Old Testament then written, and making God's word their highest instructor.

In faith the Hebrew captives prayed for wisdom, and then lived out their own prayers. To this end they avoided everything that would weaken physical or mental power. At the same time, they improved every opportunity given them to become intelligent in all lines of learning. They sought to ac-

quire knowledge for a purpose,—to honor and glorify God. They realized that in order to stand as representatives of true religion amid the false religions of heathenism, they must have clearness of intellect, and must perfect a Christian character.

These youth determined to secure a well-balanced education. They became skilled in secular as well as religious knowledge; but they studied science without being corrupted. While obtaining a knowledge of the sciences, they were studying, also, the highest science that mortals can study,—the science of salvation.

They received light direct from the throne of heaven. The Lord himself was their educator. The golden links of the chain of heaven connected the finite with the Infinite. Constantly praying, conscientiously studying, keeping themselves in touch with the Unseen, they walked with God, as did Enoch.

The history of Daniel and his companions contains a lesson for us. Inspiration declares that:

Psalm 111 [also Proverbs 9:10]

¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Religious principle lies at the foundation of the highest education. If our youth are but balanced by principle, they may with safety improve the mental powers to the very highest extent, and may take all their attainments with them into the future life. There are many who might become mighty men, if, like these faithful Hebrews, they would learn of Christ, the world's greatest Teacher.

We would not prevent the youth from obtaining knowledge in literature, science, and art; but we would impress upon the minds of all the necessity of first obtaining a knowledge of God and of His will, that the influence of His Spirit may direct every advancement in educational lines.

Daniel placed himself in the channel of heavenly light,

where he could commune with God in prayer. God cooperates with the human agencies who place themselves in this channel. Increased light is constantly shining from heaven upon those who seek for divine wisdom. Those who do not choose to place themselves in this channel meet with terrible loss. Students who exalt the sciences above the God of science, will be ignorant when they think themselves wise.

Young men, young women, if you cannot afford time to pray, cannot give time for communion with God, for self-examination, and do not appreciate the wisdom that comes from God alone, all your learning will be defective, and your education will prove a hindrance instead of an advantage.

The lesson that the youth of today most need to learn, is the importance of seeking with all the heart to know God and to obey Him implicitly. The science of the salvation of the human soul is the first lesson of life. Every line of literary or scientific knowledge is to be made secondary to this. To know God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, is life eternal.

John 17

³ And this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.



An Angel gives Daniel the Interpretation of the King's Dream
(Charming Bible Stories, 1894)

10. Earnestness of Purpose

WE READ that Daniel “purposed in his heart”¹ that he would not eat of the luxuries of the king’s table, nor drink of his wines. This purpose was not formed without due reflection and prayer, and when once his position was taken, he was not to be moved from it.

Daniel’s companions, also, resolutely purposed to choose the real, the true, and the useful, rather than the momentary indulgence of appetite and pride. They resolved that their God-given talents should not be perverted and enfeebled by selfish indulgence. They revered their own manhood. They kept their eyes steadfastly fixed on the good they wished to accomplish. They determined to do all in their power to place themselves in right relation to God; and the Lord was not unmindful of their persevering, earnest effort.

When the four Hebrew youth were receiving an education for the king’s court in Babylon, they did not feel that the blessing of the Lord was a substitute for the taxing effort required of them. They were diligent in study; for they discerned that through the grace of God their destiny depended upon their own will and action. They were to bring all their ability to the work; and by close, severe taxation of their powers, they were to make the most of their opportunities for study and labor.

While these youth were working out their own salvation, God was working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure. Here are revealed the conditions of success. To make God’s grace our own, we must act our part. The Lord does not propose to perform for us either the willing or the doing. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort. Our souls are to be aroused to cooperate. The Holy Spirit works in us, that we may work out our

¹ *Daniel 1:8.*

own salvation.² This is the practical lesson the Holy Spirit is striving to teach us.

Philippians 2

¹³ It is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

The Lord will cooperate with all who earnestly strive to be faithful in His service, as He cooperated with Daniel and his three companions. Fine mental qualities and a high tone of moral character are not the result of accident. God gives opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them. The openings of Providence must be quickly discerned and eagerly entered. There are many who might become mighty men, if, like Daniel, they would depend upon God for grace to be overcomers, and for strength and efficiency to do their work.

I address you, young men: Be faithful. Put heart into your work. Imitate none who are slothful, and who give divided service. Actions, often repeated, form habits, habits form character. Patiently perform the little duties of life. So long as you undervalue the importance of faithfulness in the little duties, your character-building will be unsatisfactory. In the sight of Omnipotence, every duty is important. The Lord has said,

Luke 16

¹⁰ He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.

In the life of a true Christian there are no non-essentials.

Many who claim to be Christians are working at cross-purposes with God. Many are waiting for some great work to be brought to them. Daily they lose opportunities for showing their faithfulness to God; daily they fail of discharging with whole-heartedness the little duties of life, which seem to them uninteresting. While waiting for some great work in which they may exercise their supposedly great talents, and thus sat-

² *Philippians 2:12.*

isfy their ambitious longings, their life passes away.

My dear young friends, do the work that lies nearest at hand. Turn your attention to some humble line of effort within your reach. Put mind and heart into the doing of this work. Force your thoughts to act intelligently on the things that you can do at home. Thus you will be fitting yourself for greater usefulness. Remember that of King Hezekiah it is written:

2 Chronicles 31

²¹ In every work that he began,...he did it with all his heart, and prospered.

The ability to fix the thoughts on the work in hand, is a great blessing. God-fearing youth should strive to discharge their duties with thoughtful consideration, keeping the thoughts in the right channel, and doing their best. They should recognize their present duties, and fulfill them without allowing the mind to wander. This kind of mental discipline will be helpful and beneficial throughout life. Those who learn to put thought into everything they undertake, however small the work may appear, will be of use in the world.

Dear youth, be earnest, be persevering.

1 Peter 1

¹³ Gird up the loins of your mind.

Stand like Daniel, the faithful Hebrew, who purposed in his heart to be true to God. Do not disappoint your parents and friends. And there is Another to be remembered. Do not disappoint Him who so loved you that He gave His life to make it possible for you to be co-laborers with God.

The desire to honor God should be to us the most powerful of all motives. It should lead us to make every exertion to improve the privileges and opportunities provided for us, that we may understand how to use wisely the Lord's goods. It should lead us to keep brain, bone, muscle, and nerve in the

most healthful condition, that our physical strength and mental clearness may make us faithful stewards.

Selfish interest, if given room to act, dwarfs the mind, and hardens the heart; if allowed to control, it destroys moral power. Then disappointment comes. The selfish man has divorced himself from God, and sold himself to unworthy pursuits. He cannot be happy; for he cannot respect himself. He has lowered himself in his own estimation. He is a failure.

True success is given to men and women by the God who gave success to Daniel. He who read the heart of Daniel looked with pleasure upon His servant's purity of motive, his determination to honor the Lord. Those who in their life fulfill God's purpose, must put forth painstaking effort, applying themselves closely and earnestly to the accomplishment of whatever He gives them to do.

Dear reader, will you not determine to be as was Daniel,—a loyal, steadfast servant of the Lord of hosts? The God of Daniel works mightily in behalf of every one who seeks to know and to do His will. By the impartation of His Spirit He strengthens every true purpose, every noble resolution.

11. The Vision of the Great Image

IN THE same year that Daniel and his companions entered the service of the king of Babylon, events occurred that severely tested the integrity of these youthful Hebrews, and revealed to an idolatrous nation the power and faithfulness of the God of Israel.

While King Nebuchadnezzar was looking forward with anxious forebodings to the future, he had a remarkable dream, by which...

Daniel 2

¹ ...his spirit was troubled, and his sleep broke from him.

Although this vision of the night made a deep impression on his mind, he found it impossible to recall the particulars. He applied to his astrologers and magicians, and with promises of great wealth and honor commanded them to tell him his dream and its interpretation. But they said,

⁴ Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.

The Lord in His providence had a wise purpose in view in giving Nebuchadnezzar this dream, and then causing him to forget the particulars, but to retain the fearful impression made upon his mind. The Lord desired to expose the pretensions of the wise men of Babylon.

The king knew that if they could tell the interpretation, they could tell the dream as well. Angered over their inability to relieve his mind, he threatened that they should all be slain, if, in a given time, the dream were not made known. He said to the Chaldeans:

⁵ The thing is gone from me, if you will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, you shall be cut to pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill.

⁶ But if you show the dream, and the interpretation thereof,

you shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor:
therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.

Still the wise men returned the same answer,

Daniel 2

⁷ Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it.

Nebuchadnezzar began to see that the men whom he trusted to reveal mysteries by means of their boasted wisdom, failed him in his great perplexity, and he said:

⁸ I know of a certainty that you would gain the time, because you see the thing is gone from me.

⁹ But if you will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me the interpretation thereof.

¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean.

¹¹ And it is a rare thing that the king requires, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.

¹² For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

When the decree went forth that all the wise men of Babylon should be destroyed, Daniel and his fellows were sought for, and informed that in accordance with the king's command, they must be slain.

¹⁴ Then Daniel answered, [not in a spirit of retaliation, but] with counsel and wisdom, to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, who was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon.

¹⁵ Why, is the decree so hasty from the king?

Taking his life in his hand, he ventured to enter the king's presence, and begged that time be granted, in order that he

might reveal to him the dream and its interpretation. To this request the monarch acceded.

Daniel 2

¹⁷ Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions:

¹⁸ That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Together the Hebrew youth presented the matter before God, and sought for wisdom from the Source of light and knowledge. Although for a time they had lived in the king's court, surrounded with temptation, they had not forgotten their responsibility to God. They were strong in the consciousness that His providence had placed them where they were; that they were doing His work, and meeting the demands of duty. They had confidence toward God. In times past they had turned to Him for strength when in perplexity and danger, and He had been to them an ever-present help.

The servants of God did not plead with Him in vain. They had honored Him, and in their hour of trial He honored them. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon Daniel and his fellows, and the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. He hastened to request an interview with the king.

The Jewish captive stood before the monarch of the most powerful empire that the sun ever shone upon. Notwithstanding his riches and glory, Nebuchadnezzar was in great distress of mind, but the youthful exile was calm and happy in his God. Then, if ever, was an opportunity for Daniel to exalt himself—to make prominent his own goodness and superior wisdom. But his first effort was to disclaim all honor for himself, and to exalt God as the Source of wisdom:

²⁷ The secret which the king has demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king;

²⁸ But there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and makes known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days...

Daniel proceeded to relate the dream. He declared:

Daniel 2

²⁸ ...Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, are these;

²⁹ As for you, O king, your thoughts came into your mind upon your bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and He that reveals secrets makes known to you what shall come to pass.

³⁰ But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that you might know the thoughts of your heart.

³¹ You, O king, saw, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before you; and the form thereof was terrible.

³² This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,

³³ His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

³⁴ You saw till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay and brake them to pieces.

³⁵ Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

Listening with solemn attention as every particular was reproduced, the king recognized this as the dream over which he had been so troubled; and he was prepared to receive with favor the interpretation. Having described the image that the king had seen, Daniel gave the interpretation, foretelling the remarkable events that were to take place in prophetic history:

Daniel 2

³⁷ You, O king, are a king of kings: for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

³⁸ And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven has He given into thine hand, and has made you ruler over them all. You art this head of gold.

³⁹ And after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

⁴⁰ And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things: and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

⁴¹ And whereas you saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with miry clay.

⁴² And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

⁴³ And whereas you saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

⁴⁵ Forasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Nebuchadnezzar felt that he could accept this interpretation as a divine revelation; for to Daniel had been revealed every detail of the dream. The solemn truths conveyed by the interpretation of this vision of the night made a deep impression on the sovereign's mind, and in humility and awe...

Daniel 2

⁴⁶ The king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshiped, [saying,]

⁴⁷ Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing you could reveal this secret.

Daniel's exposition of this dream resulted in the king's conferring honor and dignity upon him and his companions.

⁴⁸ The king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

⁴⁹ Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

“The gate of the king” was a place where justice was dispensed. Daniel's three companions were made counselors, judges, and rulers in the land. These men were not puffed up with vanity, but they saw and rejoiced that God was recognized above all earthly potentates, and that His kingdom was extolled above all earthly kingdoms.

The Lord was working in the Babylonian kingdom, and communicating light to the four Hebrew youth, in order that He might represent His work before the idolatrous nation. He would reveal that He had power over the kingdoms of the world,—power to enthrone and to dethrone kings.

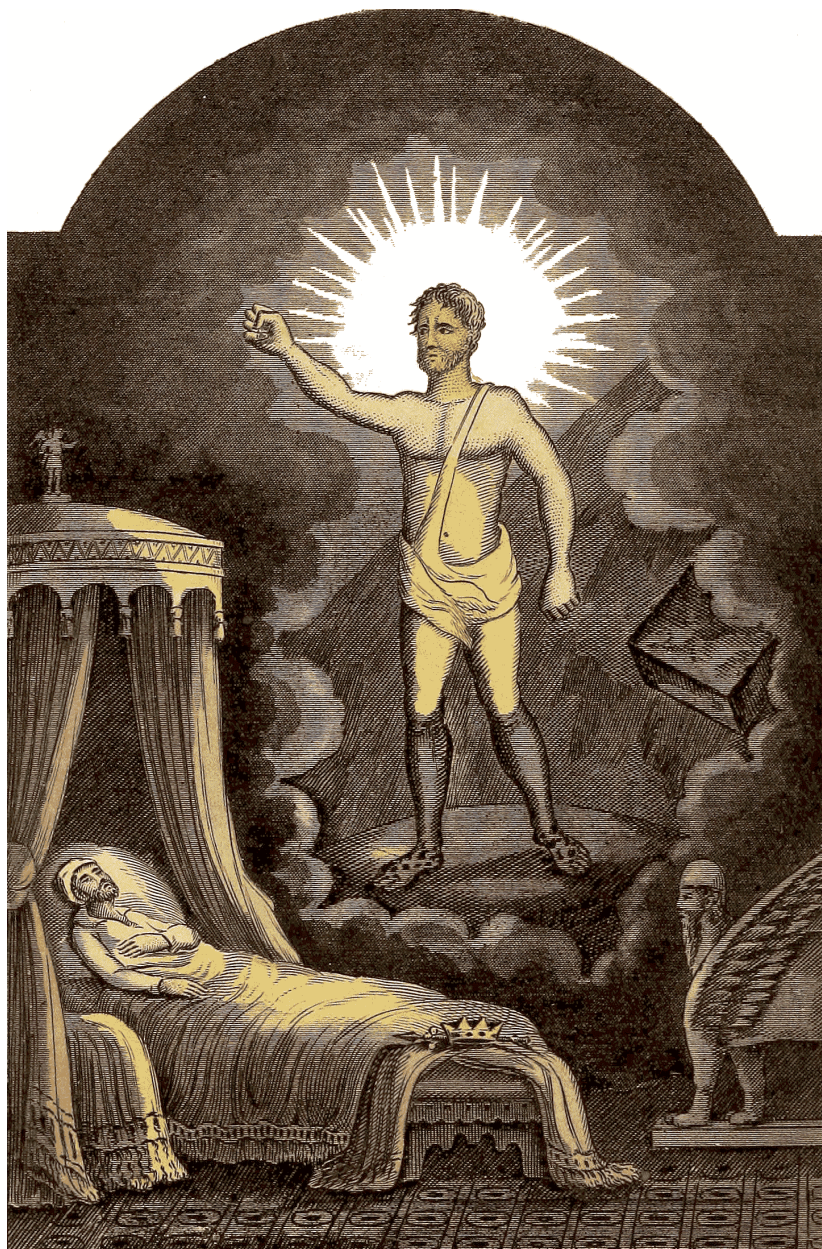
The King over all kings was communicating great truths to the Babylonian monarch, and awakening in his mind a realization of his responsibility to God. Nebuchadnezzar saw clearly the difference between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the most learned men of his kingdom.

The events of the future, reaching down to the end of time, were opened before the king of Babylon, in order that he might have light on this important subject. The record of the

dream and its interpretation was traced by the prophetic pen, in order that the rulers of the kingdoms that should succeed Babylon might have the same light.



The Image of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream
(Rembrandt, 1655 – Met Museum)



Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of the Image
(Book of Similitudes, 1860)

12. The Moral Deterioration of the Nation

Proverbs 14

³⁴ Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

THE image revealed to Nebuchadnezzar, while representing the deterioration of the kingdoms of the earth in power and glory, also fitly represents the deterioration of religion and morality among the people of these kingdoms. As nations forget God, in like proportion they become weak morally.

Babylon passed away because in her prosperity she forgot God, and ascribed the glory of her prosperity to human achievement.

The Medo-Persian kingdom was visited by the wrath of heaven because in this kingdom, God's law was trampled under foot. The fear of the Lord found no place in the hearts of the people. The prevailing influences in Medo-Persia were wickedness, blasphemy, and corruption.

The kingdoms that followed were even more base and corrupt. They deteriorated because they cast off their allegiance to God. As they forgot Him, they sank lower and still lower in the scale of moral value.

The vast empire of Rome crumbled to pieces, and from its ruins rose that mighty power, the Roman Catholic Church. This church boasts of her infallibility and her hereditary religion. But this religion is a horror to all who are acquainted with the secrets of the mystery of iniquity. The priests of this church maintain their ascendancy by keeping the people in ignorance of God's will, as revealed in the Scriptures.

It is sin that is ruining nations today. Even many leaders in the religious world have not a good conscience toward God. Many of those who claim to be Protestants have not the faith

in God's word that Luther had in the early days of the Reformation. They have left the old landmarks, and depend on ceremony and formal display to make up for their lack of the purity and piety, the meekness and lowliness, found in obedience to God.

There is no real standard of righteousness apart from God's law. By obedience to this law the intellect is strengthened, and the conscience is enlightened and made sensitive. The youth need to gain a clear understanding of God's law. They are not left to follow blindly the guidance of men. The great prophetic waymarks which God himself has set up show the path of obedience to be the only path that can be followed with certainty.

Those who love and obey the law of God will meet with trials and temptations; but if they hope and pray, and trust His word, they will be able to say, with Paul,

Romans 8

³⁸ I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

My dear young friends, have you wholly given yourselves up to God, to do His will? Are you transformed by the grace of Christ? Some claim to be one with Christ, while their special work is to make void the law of God. Will you accept their assertions? How will you distinguish God's true servants from the false prophets that Christ said would arise to deceive many? There is only one test of character,—God's holy law.

We are living in a momentous period of this earth's history. The final conflict is just before us. We see the world corrupted under the inhabitants thereof. Satanic agencies have made the earth a stage for horrors that no language can describe. War

and bloodshed are carried on by nations claiming to be Christian. A disregard for God's law has brought the sure result.

Ephesians 6

¹² We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁰ Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

There will be a sharp conflict between those who are loyal to God and those who cast scorn upon His law. The church has joined hands with the world. Reverence for God's law has been subverted. The religious leaders have taught for doctrine the commandments of men. As it was in the days of Noah, so it is in this age.

But shall the prevalence of disloyalty and transgression cause those who have revered God's law to have less respect for it, or to unite with the powers of earth in attempting to make it void?

The test comes to every one. There are only two sides. Dear young reader, on which side are you standing?

13. Obedience the Condition of God's Favor

THE strength of nations and of individuals is not found in the opportunities and facilities that appear to make them invincible; it is not found in their boasted greatness. That which alone can make them great or strong is the power of God. They themselves, by their attitude toward His purpose, decide their own destiny.

Human histories relate man's achievements, his victories in battle, his success in attaining worldly greatness. God's history describes man as heaven views him. In the divine records all his merit is seen to consist in his obedience to God's requirements. His disobedience is faithfully chronicled as meriting the punishment he will surely receive. In the light of eternity it will be seen that God deals with men in accordance with the momentous question of obedience or disobedience.

Hundreds of years before certain nations came upon the stage of action, the Omniscient One looked down the ages, and predicted through His servants the prophets the rise and fall of the universal kingdoms.

The prophet Daniel, when interpreting to the king of Babylon the dream of the great image,—an image symbolic of the kingdoms of the world,—declared to Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom should be superseded. His greatness and power in God's world would have their day, and a second kingdom would arise, which also would have its period of trial as to whether it would exalt the one Ruler, the only true God. Not doing this, its glory would fade away, and a third kingdom would occupy its place. Proved by obedience or disobedience, this also would pass away; and a fourth, strong as iron, would subdue the nations of the world.

These predictions of the Infinite One, recorded on the prophetic page and traced on the pages of history, were given to demonstrate that God is the ruling power in the affairs of

this world. He changes the times and the seasons, He removes kings and sets up kings, to fulfill His own purpose.

Under King Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon was the richest and most powerful kingdom on the earth. Its riches and splendor have been faintly portrayed by Inspiration. But it did not fulfill God's purpose; and when his time had come, this kingdom of pride and power, ruled by men of the highest intellect, was broken, shattered, helpless. Christ has declared,

John 15

⁵ Without me you can do nothing.

The illustrious statesmen of Babylon did not regard themselves as dependent on God. They thought that they had created all their grandeur and exaltation. But when God spoke, they were as the grass that withers, and the flower of the grass that fades away. The word and will of God alone endure forever.

Isaiah 40

⁶ The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field:

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades: because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people is grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

If these several kingdoms had kept the fear of the Lord always before them, they would have been given wisdom and power, which would have bound them together and kept them strong. But the rulers of the kingdoms of the world made God their strength only when harassed and perplexed. Failing to obtain help from their great men, they sought it from men like Daniel, men who they knew honored the living God and were honored by Him. To these men they appealed to unravel for them the mysteries of Providence; for they had separated themselves so far from God by transgression that they could

not understand His warnings. They were forced to appeal to those whose minds were illuminated by heavenly light, for an explanation of the mysteries they could not comprehend.

The voice of God, heard in past ages, is sounding down along the line, from century to century, through generations that have come upon the stage of action and passed away. Shall God speak, and His voice not be respected? What power mapped out all this history, that nations, one after another, should arise at the predicted time and fill their appointed place, unconsciously witnessing to the truth of that which they themselves knew not the meaning.

The centuries have their mission. Every moment has its work. Each is passing into eternity with its burden,

Matthew 25

²¹ Well done, you good and faithful servant,

—or,

²⁶ Woe to the wicked and slothful servant.

God is still dealing with earthly kingdoms. He is in the great cities.

Psalms 11

⁴ His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the [doings of the] children of men.

We are not to say, “God was,” but, “God is.” He sees the very sparrow’s fall, the leaf that falls from the tree, and the king who is dethroned. All are under the control of the Infinite One. Everything is changing. Cities and nations are being measured by the plummet in the hand of God.³ He never makes a mistake. He reads correctly. Everything earthly is unsettled, but the truth abides forever.

In the eyes of the world, those who serve God may appear weak. They may be apparently sinking beneath the billows,

³ *Zechariah* 4:10.

but with the next billow, they are seen rising nearer to their haven.

John 10

²⁸ I give unto them eternal life, [says our Lord,] and none shall be able to pluck them out of my hand.

Though kings shall be cast down, and nations removed, the souls that through faith link themselves with God's purpose shall abide forever.

Daniel 12

³ They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and forever.

14. True Wisdom

THE prophetic events related in Nebuchadnezzar's dream were of consequence to him, but the dream was taken from him in order that the wise men should not place upon it a false interpretation. The lessons taught by the dream were given by God for those who live in our day. The inability of the wise men to tell the dream is a representation of the limitations of the wise men of the present day, who, not having wisdom and discernment from the Most High, are unable to understand the prophecies.

Although he may be learned in the world's lore, the man who is not listening to hear what the Lord says in His word, and who is not opening his heart to receive this word, that he may give it to others, is not a representative of the God of heaven. Not many great and learned men of the earth will gladly receive the truth unto eternal life, though to all of them the truth will be proclaimed.

Young men and young women may obtain the highest earthly education, and yet may be ignorant of the first principles that would make them subjects of the kingdom of God. Human learning cannot qualify any one for the heavenly kingdom. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are not made thus by forms and ceremonies, or by long study of books.

John 17

³ This is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

The members of Christ's kingdom are members of His body, of which He himself is the head. They are the elect sons of God,

1 Peter 2

⁹ ...a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

The Old and the New Testament Scriptures need to be studied daily. The knowledge of God and the wisdom of God come to the student who is a constant learner of His ways and works. The Bible is to be our light, our educator.

When the youth learn to believe that God sends the dew, the rain, and the sunshine from heaven, causing vegetation to flourish; when they realize that all blessings come from Him, and that thanksgiving and praise are due to Him, they will be led to acknowledge God in all their ways, and discharge with fidelity their duties day by day; God will be in all their thoughts. Then they can trust Him for tomorrow, and avoid the anxious care that brings unhappiness into the lives of so many.

Matthew 6

³³ Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Many young men, in talking about science, are wise above that which is written; they seek to explain, by something that meets their finite comprehension, the ways and work of God; but it is all a miserable failure. True science and Inspiration are in perfect harmony. False science is something independent of God. It is pretentious ignorance.

One of the greatest evils that has attended the quest of knowledge, the investigation of science, is that those who engage in these researches too often lose sight of the divine character of pure and unadulterated religion. The worldly wise have attempted to explain, on scientific principles, the influence of the Spirit of God upon the heart. The least advance in this direction will lead the mind into the mazes of skepticism. The religion of the Bible is simply the mystery of godliness; no human mind can fully understand it, and it is utterly incomprehensible to the unregenerate heart.

The youth will not become weak-minded or inefficient by consecrating themselves to the service of God. To many, edu-

cation means a knowledge of books; but:

Psalm 111 [also Proverbs 9:10]

¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The youngest child who loves and fears God is greater in His sight than the most talented and learned man who neglects the matter of personal salvation. The youth who consecrate their hearts and lives to God are placing themselves in connection with the Fountain of all wisdom and excellence.

If the youth will but learn of the heavenly Teacher, as Daniel did, they will know for themselves that the fear of the Lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom. Having thus laid a sure foundation, they may, like Daniel, turn every privilege and opportunity to the very best account, and may rise to any height in intellectual attainments. Consecrated to God, and having the protection of His grace and the quickening influence of His Holy Spirit, they will manifest deeper intellectual power than the mere worldling.

To learn science through the interpretation that men have placed on it, is to obtain a false education. To learn of God, and of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent, is to learn the science of the Bible. The pure in heart see God in every providence, in every phase of true education. They recognize the first approach of the light that radiates from God's throne. Communications from heaven are made to those who will catch the first gleams of spiritual knowledge.

The students in our schools are to regard the knowledge of God as above everything else. Only by searching the Scriptures can this knowledge be attained.

1 Corinthians 1

¹⁸ The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

¹⁹ For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

²⁵ The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weak-

ness of God is stronger than men.

³⁰ But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

³¹ That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.

15. God's Prophetic Word

WHEN Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image was revealed to Daniel in a night vision, his first act was to thank God for this revelation. He exclaimed:

Daniel 2

²⁰ Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His:

²¹ And He changes the times and the seasons: He removes kings, and sets up kings: He gives wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

²² He reveals the deep and secret things: He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.

²³ I thank You, and praise You, O God of my fathers, who has given me wisdom and might, and has made known unto me now what we desired of You: for You have now made known unto us the king's matter.

In past ages the Lord God of heaven revealed His secrets to His prophets. The present and the future are equally clear to Him. The voice of God echoes down the ages, telling man what is to take place. Kings and princes take their places at their appointed time. They think they are carrying out their own purposes, but in reality they are fulfilling the word that God has spoken.

Paul declares that the records of God's dealings with mankind in the past...

1 Corinthians 10

¹¹ ...are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Daniel's history is given us for our admonition.

Psalms 25

¹⁴ The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

Daniel's God still lives and reigns. He has not closed heaven against His people. As in the Jewish age, so in this age, God

reveals His secrets to His servants the prophets. The apostle Peter says:

2 Peter 1

¹⁹ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:

²⁰ Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.

²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The unbelieving and godless do not discern the importance of the signs of the times, foretold in the prophetic word. In ignorance they may refuse to accept the inspired record. But when professed Christians speak sneeringly of the ways and means employed by the great I AM to make His purposes known, they show themselves to be ignorant both of the Scriptures and of the power of God. The Creator knows just what elements He has to deal with in human nature. He knows what means to employ to obtain the desired results.

Man's word fails. He who makes the assertions of men his dependence, may well tremble; for he will some day be as a shipwrecked vessel. God's word is infallible, and endures forever. Christ declares:

Matthew 5

¹⁸ Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

God's word will endure throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

16. A Perversion of Truth

THE dream of the great image, by which were opened future events reaching to the end of time, was given to Nebuchadnezzar that he might understand the part he was to act in the world's history, and also the relation that his kingdom sustained to the kingdom of heaven.

This wonderful dream caused a marked change in his ideas and opinions, and for a little time he was influenced by the fear of God; but his heart was not yet cleansed from its pride, its worldly ambition, its desire for self-exaltation.

The prophet Daniel described to King Nebuchadnezzar the rise and fall of the kingdoms that were to succeed Babylon; but the king did not cherish the conviction that came to his mind in regard to the fall of all earthly governments, and the greatness and power of Jehovah's kingdom. After the first impression wore away, he thought only of his own greatness, and studied how the dream might be turned to his own honor. The words,

Daniel 2

³⁸ You are this head of gold,

—made the deepest impression upon Nebuchadnezzar's mind. Seeing this, the wise men who had been unable to tell his dream, proposed that he make an image similar to the one seen by him, and set it up where all might behold the head of gold, which was a representation of his kingdom.

This suggestion pleased the king. His pride was flattered by the thought that he could thus represent his greatness; and instead of merely reproducing the image seen in his dream, he determined to make an image that should excel the original. This image was not to deteriorate in value from the head to the feet, like the one he had been shown, but was to be composed throughout of the most precious metal.

Thus the whole image would represent the greatness of Babylon; and he determined that by the splendor of this image the prophecy concerning the kingdoms which were to follow, should be effaced from his mind, and from the minds of others who had heard the dream and its interpretation.

God had spoken plainly in regard to the heavenly kingdom. Daniel said:

Daniel 2

⁴⁴ In the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

⁴⁵ ...the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

The king had acknowledged the power of God. Saying:

⁴⁷ Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods,...and a revealer of secrets...

But notwithstanding this acknowledgment, the years of prosperity that followed filled his heart with pride, and he forgot God, resuming his idol-worship with increased zeal and bigotry, and cherishing the thought that the Babylonian kingdom would stand forever.

At the time when Nebuchadnezzar saw the vision of the great image, he had purposed to destroy the wise men, because he discerned their deceptions, and was convinced that they did not have the learning and power that they claimed to possess. Only by the intercession of Daniel had they been saved from a cruel and ignominious death.

The king now united with these men in planning to dishonor the God of Daniel. The light that had been permitted to shine from heaven upon Nebuchadnezzar was used to serve his pride and self-exaltation. The wise men, in counsel with the king, concluded that Babylon was the kingdom which was to break in pieces all other kingdoms; and they endeavored to

make an image that would represent Babylon as eternal, indestructible, all-powerful,—a kingdom that would stand forever.

From the treasures obtained in war,

Daniel 3

¹ [Nebuchadnezzar] made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

This image was placed in a conspicuous position, and a proclamation was issued that all should worship it. Thus the grand lesson which God had given to the heathen through the vision of the great image, was misconstrued and misapplied.

- That which was designed by God to give to the world clear, distinct rays of light, Nebuchadnezzar turned from its purpose, making it minister to his pride and vanity.
- The prophetic illustration of God's glory was made to serve for the glorification of humanity.
- The symbol designed to unfold important events was used as a symbol that would hinder the spread of the knowledge that God desired the kingdoms of the world to receive.

By the magnificence and beauty of his image, the king sought to make error appear more attractive, more powerful, than the truths that God had revealed.

Those who are willing to be taught, may learn a lesson from the conduct of the king of Babylon. As Satan sought to make God-given light serve his own purposes, by leading the king to work for his own glory instead of the glory of God, so the enemy works today to pervert truth in order to hinder God's purposes.

Truth unmixed with error, is a power mighty to save; but if we allow the enemy to work through us; if, by means of the light given us, we seek to exalt self, even truth, perverted, may become a power for evil.



Daniel's Friends preserved in the Fiery Furnace
(Boni et Mali, 1583)

17. The Fiery Furnace

THE golden image set up in the plain of Dura, an image ninety feet in height and nine in breadth, presented an imposing and majestic appearance. Nebuchadnezzar issued a proclamation, calling upon all the officers of the kingdom to assemble at the dedication of this image, and, at the sound of musical instruments, to bow down and worship it. Should any fail of doing this, they were immediately to be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

The appointed day came, and at the sound of the music the vast company that was assembled at the king's command,

Daniel 3

⁷ ...fell down and worshiped the golden image.

⁸ At that time certain Chaldeans came near,...

⁹ ...and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live forever.

¹² There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded you: they serve not your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

Filled with rage, the king commanded that the men be brought before him. He inquired:

¹⁴ ...Is it true, do you not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

Pointing to the angry furnace, he reminded them of the punishment that would be theirs if they refused to obey his will. The king decided to give them a second trial. He said:

¹⁵ If you be ready, at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the image which I have made; well; but if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace;...

Then, with hand stretched upward in defiance, he asked,

Daniel 3

¹⁵ ...and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

In vain were the king's threats. He could not turn these noble men from their allegiance to the great Ruler of nations. From the history of their fathers, they had learned that disobedience to God results in dishonor, disaster, and death; that the fear of the Lord is not only the beginning of wisdom, but the foundation of all true prosperity. They knew that they owed to God every faculty they possessed; and while their hearts were full of generous sympathy toward all men, they had a lofty aspiration to prove themselves loyal to God.

When the king was troubled in regard to his dream, these men, with Daniel, had fasted and prayed, that they might understand the dream. The Lord had heard their cries, and He had given to Daniel wisdom to interpret the dream to the king. Thus their own lives and the lives of the astrologers and soothsayers had been saved.

Now the very men who had escaped death through the mercy of God to His servants, had been the prime movers in securing the decree in regard to the worship of the golden image. But the three Hebrews made no mention of these things; they knew that a controversy with the king would only increase his fury.

Standing before the angry monarch, with the image in sight, and the sound of the entrancing music in their ears, these young men thought of the promise made to the prophet Isaiah more than one hundred years before:

Isaiah 43

¹ Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are mine.

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.

The answer of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego was respectful, but decided. Looking with calmness upon the fiery furnace and the idolatrous throng, they said:

Daniel 3

¹⁶ O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter.

¹⁷ If it be so [if this be your decision], our God whom we serve will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

These Hebrew youth had unquestioning faith in God, and they were determined to honor Him at any cost. Their faith strengthened with the declaration that God would be glorified by delivering them, and with a triumphant ring of trust in their voices, they added:

¹⁸ But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

The proud monarch was surrounded by his great men, the officers of the government, and the army that had conquered nations; and all united in applauding him as having the wisdom and power of the gods. In the midst of this imposing display stood the three youthful Hebrews, steadily persisting in their refusal to obey the king's decree. They had been obedient to the laws of Babylon, so far as these did not conflict with the claims of God; but they would not be swayed a hair's breadth from the duty they owed to their Creator.

The king's wrath knew no bounds. In the very height of his power and glory, to be thus defied by the representatives of a despised and captive race was an insult which his proud spirit could not endure. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than was its wont. And without delay the Hebrew exiles were cast in. So furious were the flames, that the men who cast the Hebrews in were burned to death.

Suddenly the countenance of the king paled with terror. He looked intently upon the glowing flames, and, turning to his

lords, in tones of alarm inquired,

Daniel 3

²⁴ Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?...

The answer was,

²⁴ ...True, O king.

His voice trembling with excitement, the monarch exclaimed,

²⁵ Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God!

When Christ manifests himself to the children of men, an unseen Power speaks to their souls. They realize that they are in the presence of the Infinite One. Before His majesty, kings and nobles tremble, and acknowledge the living God as above every earthly power. The Hebrew captives had told Nebuchadnezzar of Christ, the Redeemer that was to come, and from the description thus given, the king recognized the form of the fourth in the fiery furnace as the Son of God.

His own greatness and dignity forgotten, Nebuchadnezzar descended from his throne, and hastened to the furnace. With remorse and shame he cried,

²⁶ ...You servants of the most high God, come forth.

And they obeyed, before that vast multitude showing themselves unhurt, not even the smell of fire being upon their garments. True to duty, they had been proof against the flames. Only their fetters had been burned.

²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

A change passed over the multitude. The great golden image, set up with such display, was forgotten. Men feared and trembled before the living God. The king published a decree that anyone speaking against the God of the Hebrews should be put to death,

²⁹ ...because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort.

True Christian principle does not stop to weigh consequences. It does not ask,

“What will people think of me if I do this?”

—or,

“How will it affect my worldly prospects if I do that?”

With singleness of purpose, the children of God desire to know what He would have them do, that their works may glorify Him. The Lord has made ample provision that the hearts and lives of His followers shall be controlled by divine grace, that they may be as burning and shining lights in the world.

These faithful Hebrews possessed great natural ability; they had enjoyed the highest intellectual culture, and now occupied positions of honor; but they did not forget God. Their powers were yielded to the sanctifying influence of His grace. By their steadfast integrity, they showed forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

In their wonderful deliverance were displayed, before that vast assembly, the power and majesty of God. Jesus stood by their side in the fiery furnace, and the glory of His presence convinced the proud king of Babylon that it could be no other than the Son of God.

The light of heaven had been shining forth from Daniel and

his companions, until all their associates understood the faith that ennobled their lives and beautified their characters. By the deliverance of His faithful servants, the Lord declares that He will take His stand with the oppressed, and overthrow all earthly powers that would trample upon the authority of the God of heaven.

What a lesson is here given to the faint-hearted, the vacillating, the cowardly in the cause of God! What encouragement to those who will not be turned aside from duty by threats or peril! These faithful, steadfast characters exemplify sanctification, while they have no thought of claiming the high honor.

The amount of good which may be accomplished by comparatively obscure but devoted Christians, cannot be estimated until the life-records shall be made known, when the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened. Christ identifies His interest with this class;

Hebrews 2

¹¹ He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

There should be hundreds, where there is now one among us, so closely allied to God, their lives so closely conformed to His will, that they would be bright and shining lights, sanctified wholly, in body, soul, and spirit.

The conflict still goes on between the children of light and the children of darkness. Those who name the name of Christ should shake off the lethargy that enfeebles their efforts, and should fulfill the momentous responsibilities that devolve upon them. All who do this may expect the power of God to be revealed in them. The Son of God, the world's Redeemer, will be represented in their words and in their works, and God's name will be glorified.

18. The Sabbath Test

DANIEL and his companions had a conscience void of offense toward God. But this was not preserved without a struggle. What a test was brought on the three associates of Daniel, when they were required to worship the great image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar in the plain of Dura!

The three Hebrews were called upon to confess Christ in the face of the burning fiery furnace. It cost them something to do this, for their lives were at stake. These youth, imbued with the Holy Spirit, declared to the whole kingdom of Babylon their faith,—that He whom they worshiped was the only true and living God. The demonstration of their faith on the plain of Dura was a most eloquent presentation of their principles.

The lessons we may learn from the loyalty of the Hebrew captives toward God and His law, have a direct and vital bearing upon our experience in these last days. We have a confession to make different from that which we have made; and we shall have to make it under trying circumstances. In order to impress idolaters with the power and greatness of the living God, we, as His servants, must reveal our own reverence for God. We must make it manifest that He is the only object of our adoration and worship, and that no consideration, not even the preservation of life, can induce us to make the least concession to idolatry.

The vainglory and oppression seen in the course pursued by the heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar, is being and will continue to be manifested in our day. History will repeat itself. In this age the test will be on the point of Sabbath observance.

The heavenly universe behold men trampling upon the law of Jehovah, making the memorial of God, the sign between Him and His commandment-keeping people, a thing of naught, something to be despised, while a rival sabbath is ex-

alted as was the great golden image in the plain of Dura. Men claiming to be Christians will call upon the world to observe this spurious sabbath that they have made. All who refuse will be placed under oppressive laws. This is the mystery of iniquity, the devising of satanic agencies, carried into effect by the man of sin.

The people of God will enter into no controversy with the world over this matter. They will simply take God's Word for their guide, and maintain their allegiance to Him whose commandments they keep. They will obey the words of Jehovah:

Exodus 31

¹³ Verily my Sabbaths you shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am the Lord that sanctifies you.

¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath therefore...

¹⁶ ...for a perpetual covenant.

When the Sabbath becomes the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of universal execration. It will be urged that the few who stand in opposition to an institution of the church and a law of the state, ought not to be tolerated; that it is better for them to suffer than for whole nations to be thrown into confusion and lawlessness.

This argument will appear conclusive; and against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment will finally be issued a decree, denouncing them as deserving of the severest punishment, and giving the people liberty, after a certain time, to put them to death. Romanism in the Old World, and apostate Protestantism in the New, will pursue a similar course toward those who honor all the divine precepts.

The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger,—a faith that will not faint, though severely tried. Those who now ex-

ercise but little faith are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel conscience. And even if they endure the test, they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have not made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected, they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.

We should now acquaint ourselves with God by proving His promises. Angels record every prayer that is earnest and sincere. We should rather dispense with selfish gratifications than neglect communion with God. The deepest poverty, the greatest self-denial, with His approval, is better than riches, honors, ease, and friendship without it. We must take time to pray. The youth would not be seduced into sin if they would refuse to enter any path save that upon which they could ask God's blessing.

My dear young friends, if you are called to go through a fiery furnace for Christ's sake, Jesus will be by your side. To you He declares:

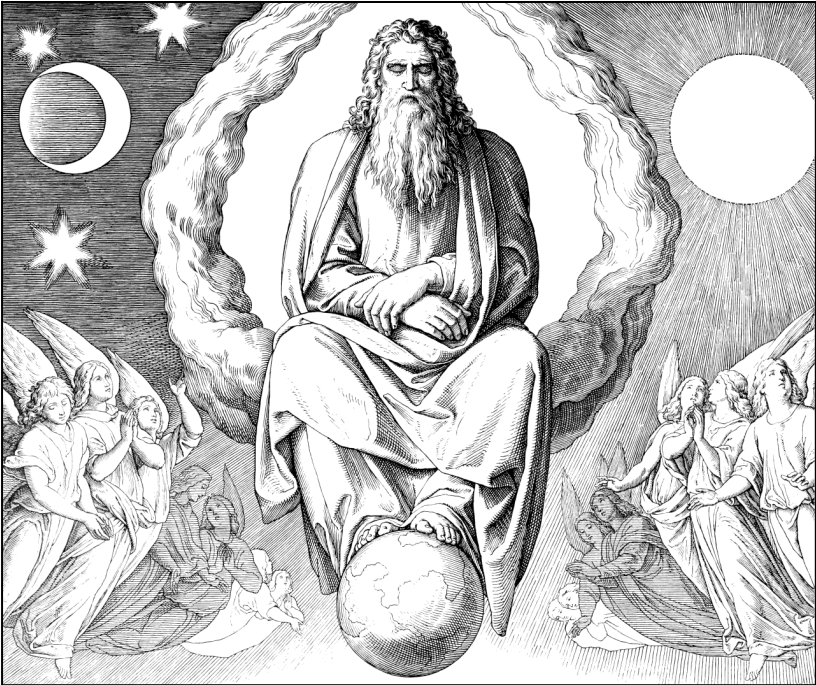
Isaiah 43

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.

The threats of men sink into insignificance beside the word of the living God. Be loyal and true, and the God who walked with the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, who manifested himself to John on the lonely island, will be with you. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain you, and you will realize the fulfillment of the promise,

John 14

²³ If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.



"God blessed the Seventh Day and sanctified it." Genesis 2:3
(Bibel in Bildern, 1860)

19. The Power and Splendor of Babylon

NEBUCHADNEZZAR was the greatest ruler of the age in which he lived. Ezekiel spoke of him as...

Ezekiel 26

⁷ ...a king of kings,

—and prophesied that God would allow him to complete the destruction of Jerusalem, and that because the inhabitants of...

¹⁷ ...the renowned city...

² [of] Tyre [would say] against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste,

⁷ God [would] bring upon Tyrus, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,”

“the terrible of the nations,”⁴ who would make this place “in the midst of the seas,”⁵

¹⁹ ...a desolate city,

¹⁴ ...[that should be] built no more.

The prophet further declared:

Ezekiel 29

¹⁸ Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus:...yet he had no wages, nor his army;...

¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord God:...

²⁰ I have given him the land of Egypt for his labor wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me.

The capital of Nebuchadnezzar’s world-empire is spoken of by Isaiah as:

Isaiah 13

¹⁹ Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldee’s excellency,

⁴ *Ezekiel 28:7.*

⁵ *Ezekiel 27:4.*

Isaiah 14

⁴ ...the golden city;

Isaiah 47

⁵ ...The lady of kingdoms;

–and by Jeremiah as:

Jeremiah 51

⁴¹ ...the praise of the whole earth

¹³ ...that dwells upon many waters, abundant in treasures.

Jeremiah also speaks of...

⁵⁸ ...The broad walls of Babylon...and her high gates;

–Isaiah, of her...

Isaiah 45

² ...gates of brass.

Habakkuk describes the Babylonians as:

Habakkuk 1

⁶ ...that bitter and hasty nation,

⁷ ...terrible and dreadful...

⁸ Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves.

Jeremiah writes in regard to the...

Jeremiah 51

³⁰ ...mighty men of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar was an instrument of God's judgments.

Jeremiah 27

⁴ Thus says the Lord:...

⁵ I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

⁶ And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

⁸ And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom

which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, says the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

⁹ Therefore harken not you to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, You shall not serve the king of Babylon:

¹⁰ For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and you should perish.

¹¹ But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, says the Lord; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

The vision of the great image, in which Babylon was represented as the head of gold, was given Nebuchadnezzar in order that he might have a clear understanding in regard to the end of all things earthly, and also in regard to the setting up of God's everlasting kingdom.

Although in the interpretation he was declared to be...

Daniel 2

³⁷ ...a king of kings,

—this was because...

³⁷ ...the God of heaven had given him a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

His kingdom was universal, extending...

³⁸ ...wheresoever the children of men dwell,

—yet it was to be followed by three other universal kingdoms, after which...

⁴⁴ ...the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.

In the providence of God, Nebuchadnezzar was given ample opportunity to ascribe to the Lord the glory for the splendor of his reign. And for a time after the vision of the great image, he acknowledged God as supreme.

Falling back into idolatrous habits, he was again, by the miraculous deliverance of the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace, led to acknowledge that:

Daniel 4

³ [God's] kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.

But once more the king perverted the warnings God had given him, and turned aside from the path of humility to follow the imaginations of his naturally proud heart. Thinking that his kingdom should be more extensive and powerful than any that would follow, he made great additions to the city of Babylon, and gave himself up to a life of pleasure and self-glorification. Of this time he himself says:

⁴ I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace.

20. Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream

BECAUSE Nebuchadnezzar did not continue to walk in the light he had received from heaven, he lost the holy impressions that had been made upon his mind. But God, in His mercy, gave the king another dream, to save him, if possible, from appropriating to himself the glory that belonged to the Supreme Ruler.

The dream given at this time to the king of Babylon was a very striking one. In a vision of the night he saw a great tree growing in the midst of the earth, towering to the heavens, and its branches stretching to the ends of the earth.

Daniel 4

¹² The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

As the king gazed upon that lofty tree, he beheld “a Watcher,” even “a Holy One,”⁶—a divine Messenger, similar in appearance to the One who walked with the Hebrews in the fiery furnace. This heavenly Being approached the tree, and in a loud voice cried:

¹⁴ Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:

¹⁵ Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth:

¹⁶ Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.

¹⁷ This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of

⁶ *Daniel 4:23.*

men, and gives it to whomsoever He will, and sets up over it the basest of men.

The king was greatly troubled by this dream. It was evidently a prediction of adversity. He repeated it to the magicians, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers; but although the dream was very explicit, none of the wise men would attempt to interpret it. Those who neither loved nor feared God could not understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They could not approach unto the throne of Him who dwells in light unapproachable. To them the things of God must remain mysteries. In this idolatrous nation testimony was again borne to the fact that only the servants of God can understand the mysteries of God.

In the early days of the king's acquaintance with Daniel, he had found that this man was the only one who could relieve him from perplexity; and now, in this later period of his reign, the king remembers his faithful servant of old,—a servant esteemed because of his unswerving integrity and constant faithfulness. Nebuchadnezzar knew that Daniel's wisdom was unexcelled, and that neither he nor his three fellow captives ever compromised principle in order to secure position in the court, or even to preserve life itself. The skill of his wise men proving ineffectual, the king sent for Daniel to interpret the dream. He said:⁷

Daniel 4

¹⁰ I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great.

¹¹ The tree grew and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the width thereof unto the end of all the earth;

¹² The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much,

⁷ **Editor's note:** the conclusion to this article in *Youth's Instructor*, was not published. I have inserted the remaining paragraphs from a Letter in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 7, p. 66 (Letter 114, 1903, To "The Leaders in Our Work," May 23, 1903).

and in it was meat for all; the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowl of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

¹³ I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven,

¹⁴ And he cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches;

¹⁵ Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth;

¹⁶ Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.

¹⁸ This dream I Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now, you, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation; but you are able: for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.

The dream and its meaning filled Daniel with astonishment, and...

¹⁹ ...his thoughts troubled him.

But he faithfully told the king that the fate of the tree was emblematic of his own downfall; that he would lose his reason, and, forsaking the abodes of men, would find a home with the beasts of the field, and that he would remain in this condition for seven years. He urged the proud monarch to repent and turn to God, and by good works avert the threatened calamity. He said:

²⁷ Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto you, and break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of your tranquility.

Had the king heeded this counsel, the threatened evil might have been turned aside. But he went on in proud superiority.

For a time he was impressed by the warning given him. But his heart was not changed, and the heart that is not wholly transformed by the grace of God, soon loses the impression made by the Holy Spirit.

Nebuchadnezzar felt that he was rooted in the hearts of his subjects, and his prosperity tempted him to do unjust things. His rule, which in the past had, to a great extent, been just and merciful, now became harsh and oppressive. The reason that God had given him was used for self-glorification.

About a year after the king received the warning, he was walking in his palace, thinking of his power as the ruler of earth's greatest kingdom. And the king spoke, and said,

Daniel 4

³⁰ Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?

The God of heaven read the heart of the king, and heard its whisperings of self-gratulation.

³¹ While the word was yet in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from you.

³² And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; they shall make you to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will.

³³ The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar:...

In a moment his reason was taken away, and he became as a beast.

³³ ...and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

For seven years he was thus degraded. For seven years he was an astonishment to his subjects. At the end of this time his reason was restored to him, and looking up in humility to the God of heaven, he recognized the divine hand in his chastisement. The transformation had come. The mighty monarch had become the humble child of God, obedient to His will. The despot had been changed into the wise, compassionate ruler.

In a public proclamation Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged his guilt and the great mercy of God in his restoration. The record says:

Daniel 4

³⁴ At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up my eyes unto heaven, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation;

³⁵ And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What do You do?

³⁶ At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom my honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom and excellent majesty was added unto me.

³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.

The lesson that the Lord would have all humanity learn from the experience of the king of Babylon is that all who walk in pride He is able to abase. By stern discipline Nebuchadnezzar had to learn the lesson that God, not man, is Ruler, that His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

So men today must learn that God is supreme. When men gain success in the work of the Lord, it is because God has given them this success, not for their own glory, but for God's

glory. He who seeks to steal a ray of light from the glory of the Lord will find that he will be punished for his presumption. David declares:

Psalm 37

³⁵ I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

³⁶ Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

Let a people boast themselves in their own wisdom, let them exalt self and indulge pride, and the result will surely follow. As surely as the sun shines by day, so surely does...

Proverbs 16

¹⁸ Pride go before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Let a church become proud and boastful, and that church will be laid low. Let those in charge of any institution become presumptuous, taking to themselves the credit for the success that has come to them in certain lines, let them glory in their wisdom and their efficiency, and they will certainly be brought to humiliation.

21. Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

FOR many months after Nebuchadnezzar's dream in regard to his humiliation, his position was unaltered. The judgment of God lingered. The king lost confidence in the dream, and regarded it as a delusion. More proud and haughty than ever, he jested at his former fears.

About a year after the king had received the divine warning, he was walking in his palace, and thinking with pride of his power as the ruler of the greatest universal kingdom, when he exclaimed,

Daniel 4

³⁰ Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?

The proud boast had scarcely left his lips when a voice from heaven announced to him that God's appointed time of judgment had come. Upon his ears fell the mandate of the Almighty:

³¹ O king Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from you.

³² And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make you to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will.

In a moment Nebuchadnezzar's reason was taken away, and he was placed on a level with the beasts of the field.

³³ ...he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

As the beasts have no knowledge of God, and therefore do not acknowledge His sovereignty, so Nebuchadnezzar had been unmindful of God and His mercies. Prosperity and popu-

larity had led him to feel independent of God, and to use for his own glory the talent of reason that God had entrusted to him. Messages of warning were sent to him, but he heeded them not. The heavenly Watcher took cognizance of the king's spirit and actions, and in a moment stripped the proud boaster of all that his Creator had given him.



Nebuchadnezzar did not profit by the warnings he received. Only through severest discipline did he learn the lesson that the Lord, and not man, is ruler, and that God's kingdom endures forever. Only after passing through long years of humiliation did the king of Babylon learn that it was not his scepter, but the scepter of Him whose kingdom is everlasting, that held supreme sway over the affairs of the nations.

Man may lift himself up in pride and boast of his power, but in an instant God can bring him to nothingness. It is Satan's work to lead men to glorify themselves with their entrusted talents. Every man through whom God works will have to learn that the living, ever-present, ever-acting God is supreme, and has lent him talents to use,—an intellect to origi-

nate; a heart to be the seat of His throne; affections to flow out in blessing to all with whom he shall come in contact; a conscience through which the Holy Spirit can convict him...

John 16

⁸ ...of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

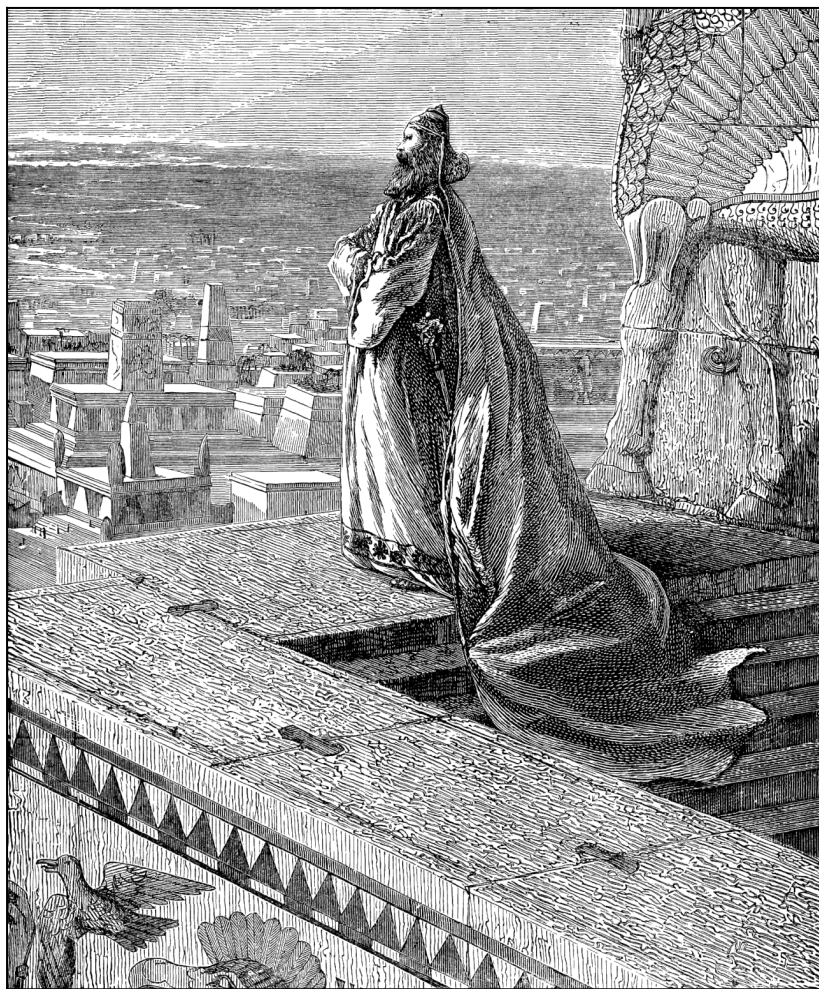
God is infinitely holy, and He hates every species of iniquity. He is great in power, and He will punish the mightiest with the most depraved. He first gives to transgressors oft-repeated warnings.

If the heart is hardened, if it refuses to heed the warnings given, and to accept the means of salvation, God will make men feel that as He has exalted and favored them, so He has to do with their casting down.

When God has forsaken those whom He has highly favored, no earthly power can avail. God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish; but His forbearance has a limit, and when the boundary is passed, there is no second probation. His wrath will go forth, and He will destroy without remedy.

Proverbs 29

¹ He, that being often reprov'd hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.



Nebuchadnezzar filled with Pride as he admires Babylon
(Bible Pictures, 1897)

22. Self-exaltation

FROM the record of Nebuchadnezzar's experience we may learn how the Lord regards the spirit of self-exaltation. Had the Babylonian king heeded God's warnings in regard to self-exaltation, the humiliation with which he was threatened might have been averted; but he went on with proud superiority, using the gifts of God as his own to exalt self, until he felt the humbling hand of the Almighty.

Not until he had passed through seven years of shame and suffering, did the king learn that God is able to abase those who walk in pride and self-exaltation.⁸ Nebuchadnezzar's experience is a warning to all.

The Creator has given abundant evidence that His power is unlimited, that He can establish kingdoms, and overturn kingdoms. He upholds the world by the word of His power.⁹ He made the night, marshaling the shining stars in the firmament.

Isaiah 40

²⁶ He calls them all by name.

Psalms 19

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork,

—showing man that this little world is but a jot in God's creation. Should every member of the human family refuse to acknowledge Him, saying,

Psalms 14

¹ ...There is no God,

—He would not want for subjects to proclaim His power.

The inhabitants of the unfallen worlds look with pity and

⁸ *Daniel 4:37.*

⁹ *Hebrews 1:3.*

reproach on man's pride and self-importance. The wealthy and the honored of the world are not the only ones who glorify self. Many who profess to revere God, talk of their wisdom and their might. They act as if God is under obligations to them, as if He cannot carry on His work without their aid.

Let such gaze into the starry heavens, and with admiration and awe study the marvelous works of God. Let them think of the wisdom He displays in maintaining perfect order in the vast universe, and of the little reason that man has to boast of his attainments.

All that man has—life, the means of existence, happiness, and other blessings unnumbered that come to him day by day—is from the Father above. Man is a debtor for all he proudly claims as his own. God gives His precious gifts, that they may be used in His service. Every particle of the glory of man's success belongs to God. It is His manifold wisdom that is displayed in the works of men, and to Him belongs the praise.

Every moment the Lord's grace is exercised in behalf of human agencies. Unless the Lord keeps the heart, we are overcome by the enemy. It is Satan who perverts man's powers, and fills the heart with thoughts of self-exaltation.

To fear the Lord in holiness, to walk before Him in contrition and humility, is the only way to true exaltation, for nations and for individuals; while to walk boastingly and proudly, in presumptuousness and transgression, ends in speedy humiliation, defeat, and ruin.

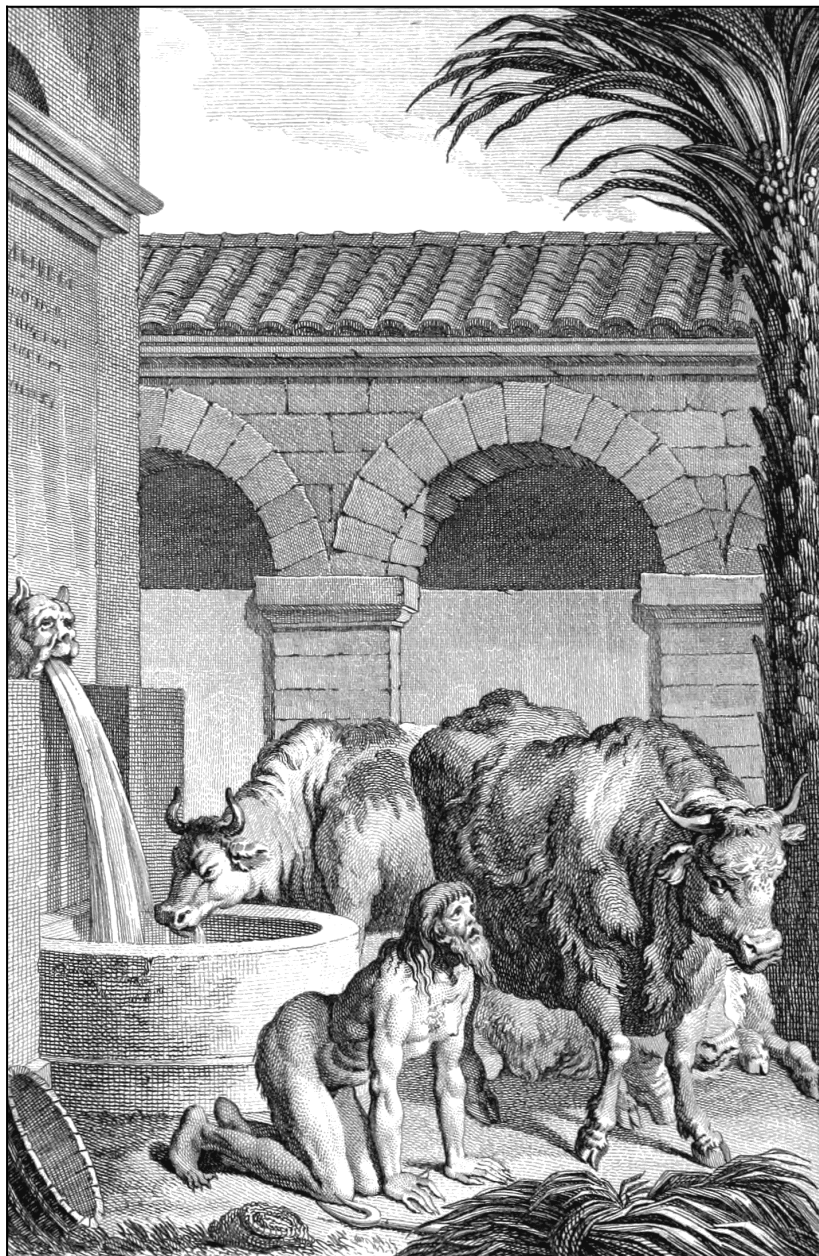
Men may forget, men may deny their wrong course of action, but a record of it is kept in the book of remembrance, and in the great day of judgment, unless men repent and walk humbly before God, they will meet this dread record just as it stands. If they repent, and keep the fear of the Lord before them, their sins will be blotted out.

God is infinitely gracious. He waits for us to return to Him

by heart-humiliation, confession, and repentance. He will have mercy on all, and will save all who cherish contrition of soul. The renunciation of self-confidence prepares the way for true faith in God.

The moment human beings renounce their selfishness, covetousness, and idolatry, that moment God becomes their all-sufficient Helper. In the infinite fulness of His grace He imparts, for time and for eternity, whatever is needed for the souls and bodies of those who believe.

O that those upon whom light has been shining in rich abundance, might become humble, faithful men and women! O that they would, like the king of Babylon, raise their voices in recognition of God, revealing that they have come to their senses, and that their heart of stone has been changed to a heart of flesh! Then they might form the cabinet of God, being made, in truth, guardians of sacred trusts.



Nebuchadnezzar, as a wild man, lifts his eyes to Heaven
(La Sainte Bible, 1789)

23. Nebuchadnezzar's Restoration

FOR seven years Nebuchadnezzar, in his degradation, was an astonishment to all his subjects. For seven years he was humbled before the world, as a punishment for ascribing to himself the glory that belonged to God. At the end of this time his reason was restored to him. Through his terrible humiliation he was brought to see his own weakness, and to acknowledge the supremacy of God.

In the book of *Daniel* is given the king's public confession of his restoration. We read:

Daniel 4

³⁴ At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up my eyes unto heaven, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation;

³⁵ And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What do You do?

³⁶ At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom my honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom and excellent majesty was added unto me.

The chastening that came upon the king of Babylon wrought reformation in his heart, and transformed him in character. He now understands God's purpose in humiliating him. In this chastisement he recognizes the divine hand.

Before his humiliation he was tyrannical in his dealings with others, but now the fierce, over-bearing monarch is changed into a wise and compassionate ruler. Before his humiliation he defied and blasphemed the God of heaven, but now he humbly acknowledges the power of the Most High,

and earnestly seeks to promote the happiness of his subjects.

At last, under the rebuke of God, the king had learned the lesson which all kings and rulers need to learn,—that true greatness consists in goodness. He acknowledged Jehovah as the living God, saying:

“Come, all you that fear God, and I will make known to you what He has done for my soul. It is now my wish that all the people of my realm shall learn what I have learned, that the God whom they should worship is not a golden image, but He who made the heavens and the earth.”

Daniel 4

³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.

Thus the king upon the Babylonian throne became a witness for God, giving his testimony, warm and eloquent, from a grateful heart that was partaking of the mercy and grace, the righteousness and peace, of the divine nature. God’s design that the greatest kingdom of the world should show forth His praise, was now fulfilled.

The public proclamation in which Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged his guilt and the great mercy of God in his restoration, is the last act of his life as recorded in Sacred History.

