

Daniel 05-11-13a

As we continue our worship this Sunday morning, this is the 13th of November, 2005. It's the weekend that we continue celebrating Veterans Day and the Marine Corps birthday, not necessarily in that order. A lot of Marines are recovering from a celebration last night, I'm sure.

But we are appreciative of the freedom that we enjoy in our country. We know that that freedom has been secured and maintained by military conquest, by victory, by defeating and destroying the enemies of our nation and our way of life, by killing them in great numbers, by sending them forward to the judgment seat of unbelievers at the great white throne. And the more efficiently and effectively we can do that, the better.

Whether it is in the artillery, the king of battle, blowing them into tiny fragments, whether it is small arms fire, whether it is logistics support, whether it is serving at home or abroad, the men and women who have devoted a portion of their lives to service of our nation, in many cases at the cost of those lives and at great hardship to their families, is something that is rightfully celebrated. It is something that was celebrated in Israel. Read the militant Psalms of David.

Blessed be the Lord that teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight. Do you think David enjoyed just going out and shedding blood because he was sort of a bloodthirsty type? Not at all. But David recognized that the only way you can deal with violent men is with greater violence.

In some cases, ultimate violence. Whether it is capital punishment in our justice system or capital punishment in warfare, you make the other guy die for his country so that you can live in your own, you and your family and your generations to come. So we celebrate that.

We have lost nearly all of our veterans now due to time from World War I. I think that the official roster of World War I veterans is down below 30. It is all we have left of living veterans. World War II, that generation is rapidly checking out.

We have our Korean War veterans. We have our Vietnam War veterans. It is interesting to note that those of us who grew up in the 60s and 70s looking back on World War II, Vietnam is now as distant to this generation as World War II was to us.

If you think about the 1970s, World War II was 30 years earlier. Well, here we are at 2005 and the Vietnam War was over in 1975. So we are further from Vietnam than we were from World War II when I graduated high school.

I think there is kind of a logarithmic scale there. You know how the numbers on the left are far apart and the numbers on the right are close together? As I get further along in my life, I think the years are getting closer together. Somehow it does not make any sense to me.

It defies the laws of physics. In any case, we are grateful to God for allowing our nation to

continue to this point because the greatest blessing we have is freedom to assemble and freedom to worship and freedom to pursue our lives before God as we see fit without persecution, without oppression, without imprisonment, without being in fear of our lives. We take this for granted largely in this country.

We do not live in Cambodia. We do not live as many of them did with the fear of the Khmer Rouge in days gone by. We do not live in a communist country.

We do not live in South America where the shining path will root you out and kill you for your Christian faith. We do not live in a nation dominated by Islam where you can literally fear for your life if you are a Christian because that religion is a militant and violent and dominating religion that seeks, as communism once did, to take the world. It is a part of the faith and do not let anybody tell you any different.

Read the Koran. The history of Islam is an unbroken string of violence. Why do you think the Crusades were launched? Everybody says, Oh, Christianity.

Look at those mean old Christians. They launched the Crusades going over there and beating up on a peaceful people or something. Go back and read history.

Why do you think all of those Europeans marched over to Jerusalem? Because there was rife slaughter and bloodshed for no reason other than Muslims wanted to take over the world. Well, I don't have time to extemporize on that subject because we do have a scripture reading this morning and it is Psalm 42. Psalm 42.

Our study in the book of Daniel has brought us to the place where Nebuchadnezzar is about to suffer seven years of hardship, seven years of insanity. Sometimes we look around in our life and we think this is insane. Well, this is a good passage to comfort and encourage us to compare and contrast with the situation that Daniel is going to observe for the better part of a decade in the national life of Babylon and in the personal life of Nebuchadnezzar.

Take a look. This is the first song in the second book of the Psalms. There are five books of Psalms and this is number one in the second book.

This is Psalm 42. It's subtitled in your New King James, Yearning for God in the midst of distresses. Yearning for God in the midst of distresses.

It is dedicated to the chief musician. It is a contemplation of the sons of Korah. The contemplations of the sons of Korah are generally a little later than the Psalms of David and they were composed in the days when there was a lot of trouble in Judah.

They were composed in the days of the divided kingdom when there were not only external pressures such as the Assyrians coming down from the north and carrying away the ten tribes north of Judah but also internal problems, false worship, idolatry, syncretism, diluting down of the faith of Israel by combining it with other things. We understand that worship should take

place at the temple but we'll bring other things in. Why not worship all the gods? We'll worship the God of Israel and we'll sacrifice to Molech and Baal and Ashtar and we'll go to the high places and we'll have the best of everything.

The sons of Korah contemplated life in distress. This is the song that they composed. As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night while they continually say to me, Where is your God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude.

I went with them to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast. Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me.

Therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan and from the heights of Hermon, from the hill Mizar. Deep calls unto deep at the noise of your waterfalls. All your waves and billows have gone over me.

The Lord will command his loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, a prayer to the God of my life. I will say to God, my rock, why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a breaking of my bones, my enemies reproach me, while they say to me all day long, where is your God? Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of my countenance and my God. I think all of us at times have felt this sort of frustration, this sort of impatience with our circumstances, and we are tempted to chime in with those who say, where is your God? Notice that the psalmist here says, hope in God.

He's talking to his own soul, and he says, hope in God. Hope, an intrinsic part of hope is waiting. Hope is always future, isn't it? There's no such thing as a hope that is present.

Hope is always directed at something in the future. Always, by definition. And so basically when you tell your soul, hope in God, you're saying, be patient and wait.

They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. If you've ever thought about the content of that verse, those who are waiting on God are on some kind of a journey, aren't they? Because they're having to run and they're having to walk. If you're where you needed to be, if you were at your own dwelling, if you had your vine and your fig tree and your millennial kingdom, you're not having to run and walk anywhere, are you? People who are at peace and have no problems don't have to run.

And they don't have to walk. They're sitting, being fanned with a big palm leaf, you know, sipping a mint julep and everything's great. They who wait upon the Lord need strength and

they renew it in hope.

Our strength is renewed in hope. And we need strength because we're on a road and we are having to run and we're having to walk. Sometimes you walk, sometimes you run.

But you don't want to run out of steam in the middle of the road. You don't want to make a mistake in the road. You remember the story of Asahel and how he was running after Saul's general, Abner.

Asahel was Joab's brother. Joab was David's general and Abner was Saul's general. And you have Asahel, Joab's brother, David's nephew, running along.

He's a young guy but he's very fleet of foot. He's a great runner. Abner is an older guy.

He's rumbling along the road. They've been defeated in battle and he's fleeing for his life. Asahel says, I'm going to make a name for myself.

I'm going to be the man, it's like the movie title, the man who shot Liberty Valance. I'm going to become famous as the guy who slew Abner, the general of the armies of the opposition. So Asahel starts running after him.

Abner looks over his shoulder. He recognizes Joab's brother Asahel and he says, Asahel, you better turn back. Asahel says, no way.

I've got you on the run. I'm going to catch you. I'm going to kill you.

And they'll be singing my praises. All the women of Israel are going to be touting me. My name will be on the billboards and on the front pages and on the newsstands at the grocery store for years to come because I'm the guy that killed you.

Abner said, Asahel, you better turn around and go back. I don't want to have to kill you. Asahel says, there is no way you're going to beat me, old man.

I am on your tail. And up he comes. Just as he's about to deal the fatal blow to Abner, Abner, the wily veteran of many battles, keeps his back to Asahel.

Asahel thinks he's got him, but Asahel's a rookie. He's green. And all Abner does is stop and shove the butt end of his spear right through Asahel's abdomen.

And Asahel falls in the middle of the road with his innards spilling out on the ground. And he's writhing in agony and he doesn't die for quite a while. And other people who are also running down the road pursuing the fleeing army see this horrible sight.

This sight that is just... These are people who dealt in hand-to-hand combat all the time, who hacked each other's limbs off, who cut each other's heads off, or stabbing and slashing. There wasn't any long-range battle or bombing or artillery to speak of in those days. You saw a lot of

bloodshed face-to-face, and yet these guys are horrified.

And everybody stops in the road and can't go any further because they see this horrible sight of Asahel slowly dying in the road. Well, we walk and we run down a road. And we've got to do it intelligently.

We have to do it with hope. We have to do it with faith. It has to be the right road.

It has to be the right time to walk and the right time to run. They who wait upon the Lord renew their strength. They mount up with wings like eagles.

There are three different modes of transport for those who wait on the Lord. They can fly, they can run, and they can walk. And in different situations, we need different kinds of movement.

Sometimes we need to soar above the problem. We need to just get up out of contact with the earth and just rise above it and not remain at the level of those who are opposing us, those who are causing problems. We mount up with wings like eagles and we see the big picture from God's perspective.

God sees the whole sweep of history. God sees the long term. If there's a single difference between God's perspective and man's perspective, it's the difference between time and timeless.

It's the difference between the man under the sun, that Solomon talks about in Ecclesiastes, and that which transcends the sun, that which goes beyond the grass that springs up in a day and then withers. It's the long term. It is the long spirit that prevails, not the tall spirit, Solomon says.

Well, in the same way, the psalmist here says, I will remember you from the land of the Jordan and from the heights of Hermon. Now, this is not Jerusalem, is it? Where's the land of the Jordan? It's distant. Where's Mount Hermon? It's distant.

These are the fringes. These are the borders. You've been kind of driven out of your capital.

You're not able to be there in the house of God, enjoying His immediate presence. You've been scattered. You've been driven away.

You've been called away. You're out on the fringes. And you feel as far away from God as you can get and still be an Israelite and still be in the land.

Whether I'm in the Jordan or in the heights of Hermon or the hill Mazar, there is a deep calling to deep at the noise of the waterfalls. The waves and billows are washing over me. It seems as though the chaotic forces of darkness are prevailing.

But the Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime and in the night. His song shall be with me. A prayer to the God of my life.

We have to get a better view. We can fly. We can run.

We can walk. Different situations call for different modes of movement. But all of them are enabled and empowered by the strength that comes from God.

It is a legitimate prayer, by the way, to pray as the psalmist does here in verse 9. Why have you forgotten me? I will say to God, my rock. This seems like a contradiction, doesn't it? Look at verse 9. I will say to God, my rock. I know that He's my rock and my salvation.

He's the foundation under my feet. He's my immovable object. But I will still say to Him, why have you forgotten me? Was it sinful for Jesus to look up from the cross and say, my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Did Jesus commit a sin there? Well, we know that Jesus was sinless.

And that tells us that it is not illegitimate to look up to God in the midst of dire distress and say, Lord, have you forgotten? Have you left? Where are you? Show me your presence. Show me your power. Show me your deliverance.

It's not an illegitimate prayer to be in distress and say, why have you forgotten me? Why am I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Satanic oppression. Demonic oppression. The oppression from the unbelieving and the disobedient world.

Sometimes our worst oppression comes from fellow believers who are not walking on the narrow road. And they're trying to drag us off that road onto the broad way through the great big old super highway gate that leads to destruction. People falling off the end of that thing like lemmings going into the sea.

And they want us to go with them. And they mock and deride us and say, where is your God? What is your Christianity doing for you? I don't see where you've prospered or you've got anything that I don't have. What's the matter with you? And we turn to God and we say, Lord, I don't see any evidence of that either at the moment, but you are still my rock.

This person is praying to God, right? Haven't forgotten God. Haven't abandoned God. Haven't turned away from God.

Turning toward God. Saying, I will say to God, my rock, why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning? My enemies are reproaching me and it's like breaking my bones. It's like breaking my bones.

They say to me all day long, where is your God? But then, the psalmist turns back and he says, look, soul. Look, self. Why are you disquieted? Why are you cast down? Hope in God.

I will yet praise Him. We have to tell ourselves. We have to work ourselves through these times of trial.

We do it. We think it. We make it happen in our own souls.

We have to exercise faith. God gives us promises, principles, and doctrines. God has put His presence within us.

He's given us His Holy Spirit and He's given us His Word, but we have to glue those things together. We have to make it happen in our thoughts or it isn't going to happen. And part of that process is looking around and saying, I don't feel the presence of God.

I don't see the power of God active right now. Why is that? Well, is our faith failing? What did Jesus pray for Peter? Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat. Jesus says to Peter, I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail.

This is the point of our existence. God did not bring us into this life to live in a rose garden, to tread a petal-strewn path, to be soft and cushioned and protected from every storm. Just the opposite.

He has put us here to be buffeted, to have tribulation. Why? Because the testing of our faith produces patience. But that patience has to have its perfect work so that we can be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

It's an odd thing that it's only by taking away from us that God can complete us. It is only by tearing us down that He can build us up. Because we have a lot of stuff that needs to be excised.

We have rocks in our soul that need to be broken up. We have weeds and thorns growing in our field that need to be uprooted and burned. And the only way to do that is to do some violence to the field.

So, when we look at our soul, we say, my soul is cast down. We say, why is that? My soul shouldn't be cast down. I should be bent but not broken.

I should be oppressed but not squashed. Why? Hope in God. I will yet praise Him.

He is the help of my countenance. That's kind of an odd phrase, isn't it? The help of my countenance. What's your countenance? Countenance is your face, your aspect.

Right? You know Rowan Atkinson? That's Mr. Bean and Black Adder. He's a British comedian. I think most of you are familiar with him.

Do you remember the name of the production company that's produced all of his shows? The name of that company is Tiger Aspect. And the logo is a tiger's eye and a couple of tiger stripes that wind up making the letter A. Tiger Aspect. And I've scratched my head over that.

You know, people... David Letterman's production company is World Wide Pants. Figure that out. You know, I don't know how people arrive at these names for their production companies.

World Wide Pants. But that's kind of a Letterman type of thing. But Rowan Atkinson's company

is Tiger Aspect.

And when you think about that, you think, you know, that's a good name for a company. It means we are aggressive. We have the aspect of a tiger.

It's not caterpillar aspect. It's not, you know, housefly aspect. Here I am to be squashed.

Tiger Aspect. We can be under a lot of pressure, but we can still have a countenance of confidence. A countenance of aggressive faith.

We should not limit ourselves to a clinging, desperate, strap myself to the mast kind of faith. Well, I just am hanging on, trying not to be washed overboard. The psalmist says, Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God.

He is God my rock. He is the help of my countenance. We're not just grimly clenching our teeth and clinging to the shattered remnants of our ship.

We ought to have the tiger aspect. We ought to mount up with wings as eagles. Run and not be weary.

Walk and not faint. You know the old saying, When the tough are under pressure, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Well, it ought to be equally true in our spiritual life.

When we are most oppressed and when we are most afflicted, that is the time to stand up and say, God is the help of my countenance. And I'm not just going to slog grimly through this trial. I am going to stand up.

I am going to walk. I am going to run. And if need be, I am going to mount up with wings as eagles.

Because God is my rock. The Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime and in the night. His song will be with me.

Well, as we return now to Daniel 4, we find that there are dire times coming for the king of Babylon, for the nation of Babylon. It has been foretold in this dream that Nebuchadnezzar has. It's his second dream.

The first dream tells him how great he's going to be. The second dream tells him how bad off he's going to be. You have two different dreams here.

A dream of greatness and a dream of debasement. He is going to be like a tree that is chopped down. And the bigger they are, the harder they fall.

And this is a big, big tree. If you knock over the image of gold and silver and bronze and iron, and iron mixed with clay that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his first vision, which part of that image is going to hit the ground the hardest? Which one's got the greatest acceleration and the greatest

mass? It's the head. Crush the feet, and when that image falls, the head is going to hit the ground.

Have you ever had this happen? I've probably told you this story before, but I was feeling pretty cocky and pretty self-assured. I'd never really ice skated before, but I went to visit my cousin Bob in Ponca City, Oklahoma. I was about 12 or 13 years old.

He was a part of a real active church youth group, and they were going to go ice skating. I'd never been ice skating in my life. I'd done roller skating, but I strapped on the skates and I got them on real tight, and I could see that you have to keep your ankles straight and all that.

So I started slowly skating around the edge, holding on, and I got the feel of it. I thought, hey, this is pretty good. And so I started skating around without holding on to the rail, and it felt really good.

I had my balance, my skates were straight, and I thought, boy, this is really fun. I started going faster and faster, and I could see other people skating, and they were skating backwards, and I turned around, and the first time I ever ice skated, I skated backwards. And I thought, well, you know, I was just having a really good day.

Everything was going great. I turned back around, I was going really fast, and I thought, well, there's nothing to this ice skating. Well, I remembered that I'd seen Peggy Fleming skating, and you know how when they get all done and they come over to the side to get their flowers and that, they come over, and then they turn their skates sideways, and they shave that ice, and it makes a big spray, and they come up, and it's a real dramatic stop.

I thought, you know, I can do that. So I got up a good head of steam, and I headed for the side, and I jumped up and turned my skates sideways, and they stuck in the ice, and I went over like a pole and hit my head on the ice and just knocked myself senseless. When I could see again, I looked at where my head had hit the ice, and there was a round white spot, you know, like you'd hit the ice with a sledgehammer, and I ended up with this great big green-blue bruise on my forehead, and I just probably concussed myself.

I didn't go to the doctor, but I was pretty worthless for the rest of that day. You know, Bob scraped me up off the ice, and they carried me over, and, you know, took me home, gave me aspirin, put a rag with more ice on my head, but it is graphic evidence of physics that when you take away the base underneath something, the head is what is going to hit the hardest. Thankfully, you know, if it was anywhere else, I'd have probably broke something, but my head was a veteran of many such smacks, and I don't think I was permanently damaged.

But Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold on this image. He is the great tree. Both of these dreams lift him up high, don't they? He is as high as it gets.

There's nothing higher than the head of the image. There's nothing higher than this great mighty tree under which the birds and the animals shelter. Many times we think that we are on

top.

We have achieved a level of competence, a level of accomplishment, a level of satisfactory dominance in something. That's what Nebuchadnezzar has done. Well, in chapter 4, he tells us the story of this.

A tree, verse 10, in the midst of the earth, its height was great. The tree grew and became strong. Its height reached to the heavens.

It could be seen to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves were lovely, its fruit abundant. In it was food for all.

The beast in the field found shade under it. This sounds like Psalm 1. The tree bringing forth fruit in its seasons. Leaf doesn't wither.

It's a strong and permanent fixture. But, I saw in the visions of my head, verse 13, there was a Watcher, a Holy One, coming down from heaven who cried aloud and said thus, Chop down the tree and cut off its branches. Now, this isn't a failure of the tree, is it? The tree didn't fail to sink its roots down.

It didn't fail to bear fruit. The tree is doing great. This is an act of intervention from outside.

This is an angelic intervention in human history. Chop it down. Strip off its leaves.

Scatter its fruit. Let the beasts run out from under it and the birds fly out of its branches. Leave the stump and roots in the earth bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field.

Let it be wet with the dew of heaven and let it graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. And, it switches in verse 15 and 16 from talking about the tree to talking about a man. Let his heart be changed from that of a man.

Let him be given the heart of a beast and let seven times pass over him. This decision is by the decree of the Watchers and by the sentence of the Holy Ones. Now, what's interesting about this is that there are other passages that talk about this angelic counsel.

You have, for example, in Jeremiah chapter 4. Keep your finger in Daniel 4 and turn to Jeremiah chapter 4. Jeremiah chapter 4 and verse 16 and 17. You go back up and start at verse 14. O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness that you may be saved.

How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you? For a voice declares from Dan and proclaims affliction from Mount Ephraim. Make mention to the nations. Yes, proclaim against Jerusalem that Watchers come from a far country and raise their voice against the cities of Judah.

Like keepers of a field, they are against her all around. Because she has been rebellious against

me, says the Lord, your ways and your doings have procured these things for you. This is your wickedness because it is bitter because it reaches to your heart.

There are multiple reasons why people suffer in this life. Sometimes it is for pure discipline. Sometimes it is because of disobedience and apathy and ignoring repeated warnings.

Other times it is undeserved suffering. Other times it is cursing that is going to be turned to blessing but we don't bring it on ourselves by disobedience. It is in fact because we are strong, because we are equipped that God can glorify Himself in us by allowing the enemy to come in.

This is Job's situation. So you have Nebuchadnezzar kind of affliction. You have Job kind of affliction.

And the important thing for us is to make sure that if we are afflicted, it is of the Job category. And if not, we turn and repent and save ourselves a lot of grief. You and your ways and your doings, it says Jeremiah 4.18, have procured these things for you.

It is your wickedness. It is bitter. It reaches to your heart.

Watchers have come from a far country and raised their voice. Isaiah chapter 39 and verse 3. Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and said to him, what did these men say and from where did they come to you? Hezekiah said, they came to me from a far country from Babylon. You remember when the visitors came and Hezekiah showed them all the stuff? They came from a far country.

And that sowed the seeds of destruction for the temple and the carrying away of all of those things by the Babylonians sometime later. We have to guard our soul against the inroads of those from a far country. Those who are going to come in and recon, find our weaknesses and come back later and exploit them.

But here you have angels who observe and who announce divine discipline on the people of God or on a prominent personage, in this case, Nebuchadnezzar. And Nebuchadnezzar is a believer. If you look at Psalm 103, the Lord in verse 19 of Psalm 103, the Lord has established His throne in heaven and His kingdom rules over all.

His kingdom rules over all. Now, you can't be a one-person kingdom. God can't be a kingdom all by Himself.

If He's got a kingdom that rules, that kingdom is made up of a constituency, right? And in the next couple of verses, you find this out. Psalm 103 20, Bless the Lord, you His angels who excel in strength, who do His word. Heeding the voice of His word.

Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you ministers of His who do His pleasure. Bless the Lord, all His works in all places of His dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

And this Psalm of David, Psalm 103, recognizes the same thing we saw in Psalm 42, a Psalm of

the sons of Korah. We have to tell our soul to pray to the Lord, to hope in the Lord, to trust in the Lord, and to bless the Lord. And to acknowledge that He has control over everything.

It is His dominion. Nothing happens without His permission, without His say-so. His heavenly kingdom dominates.

It is mediated through angels. Certainly in the Old Testament, you see this clearly. They do His will.

They heed the voice of His word. They accomplish His good pleasure. And it is these watcher angels in Daniel chapter 4 who issue the decree in verse 17.

This decision to humiliate Nebuchadnezzar comes by the voice of the watchers, the decree of the watchers, and the sentence of the word of the holy ones. It has a purpose. That the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men.

We forget this. It's a dismal and a sad truth that even as believers, even as those who have studied the word of God for a long time, we get caught up in circumstances, we get caught up in situations, caught up in interpersonal relations, caught up in stresses, and in requirements, in deadlines. And we forget this truth, that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, that He gives it to whomever He will, and He sets over it the lowest of men.

God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. Sometimes we find that we are under goofy authority, silly teachers in school, wielding authority and they don't know how to do it, silly employers, silly government officials, silly congress, silly governors. Thankfully at the moment, we don't have a silly president, but we have had silly presidents in the past.

Silly judges, sitting, for example, in the 9th district court, making silly decisions about what will and will not be taught to kindergartners regarding human reproduction, affecting 20% of the entire United States with their goofy decisions. But the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and when we have this kind of nonsense going on, when we have bad authority, when we have evil running rampant, we have to remember that the Most High rules. He sets over it sometimes even the lowest of men.

What's fascinating about this is Nebuchadnezzar himself was a nobody. If you go back in the history of Babylon, you go back to Merodach, Baladan, the first king of Babylon, like a hundred years earlier, with whom these watchers that came from Babylon were under that early king. Merodach, Baladan, he's the first one to organize.

There were a lot of different tribes in Babylon, and they had different names, and he united them. The reason they had never been a power before is it was like the United States, and the states couldn't get together and form a national government. It was just a bunch of feudal states.

Merodach, Baladan pulled all of those together, and he laid the foundation upon which

Nabopolassar built. But from Merodach, Baladan on, there was one ruling tribe out of all of those that sort of dominated. It would be like the tribe of Judah dominating Israel.

But when you come down to Nabopolassar, he comes out of nowhere. He's a non-royal. He's a non-princely type.

You have other analogs of this in Roman history where you have a general coming up that isn't of the Caesars. He's just a really good general. And that's what Nabopolassar was.

And he was able to go and take over without having that background, without having the bloodline, so to speak. And Nebuchadnezzar is his son. And Nebuchadnezzar is a nobody when it comes to roots, when it comes to background and heritage.

He can't claim membership. They can't even figure out what tribe Nebuchadnezzar was from, which of these clans he was from. And you can bet if he was from any of the notable clans, it would have been in the inscriptions, and it would have been in the records.

But he's come up by his own bootstraps. He's pulled himself up to become great. And there was a Roman Caesar, his name slips my mind, that did the same thing.

He basically got his job by military conquest. That's what Nebuchadnezzar has done. So when it says that God gives it to whomever He wills and sets over it the lowest of men, this is in the dream to Nebuchadnezzar.

And it's a little prick to his conscience. And it punctures his balloon. He's starting to get proud and he's starting to think a lot of himself.

And he says, look, you know, it's God that has put you where you are. You are, by all accounts, the humblest of men. Do you not remember that? Are you not grateful and thankful that God has allowed you to come to this point? Does Nebuchadnezzar know there is a God in heaven? He learned that from his first dream, didn't he? He learned that when he first elevated Daniel and the other three Hebrew children.

He learned at that time that there is a Most High God. He had it further reinforced when he tried to burn up Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah and saw the fourth man, the angelic companion in their time of trial. And yet, he still hasn't learned.

Well, he's going to have a one year probation period after being told that it is God who gave him his throne. It's God who sets over the kingdom of men whomever He wills and sets over it the lowest of men. It's a little bit of an insult.

Look, Nebuchadnezzar, you're the lowest of men and the only reason you're sitting where you're sitting is because God puts you there. And when Daniel hears this dream, it says in verse 19, he was astonished for a time. This is an interesting word.

This is the word in Aramaic, Shemam. S-H-apostrophe-M-A-M It's form here is an ithpoel or an

ethpoel, which is a passive. Hithpoel is the reflexive stem.

And this is the sort of intensive reflexive. And it has the idea, it's a really unusual form, but Daniel is appalled and he can't even bring himself to speak for an hour. Now, everybody's gotten up in the morning and had some kind of a vivid dream and they talk to somebody else and say, oh, you'll never believe what I dreamed last night.

And when you tell that dream to somebody, you expect some sort of reaction. And they'll either say, oh, that was a goofy dream or let me tell you my weird dream. But if you tell your dream to somebody, especially when you're expecting an interpretation, and they just go all pale and silent and they sit there for an hour.

How long is an hour? We haven't even been here an hour. And Daniel is sitting there silent with all the blood drained out of his face. He's appalled.

He's shocked. And Nebuchadnezzar's looking at him. He thinks, well, he's having to take some time to think here.

But he keeps looking at Daniel's face. And after an hour goes by, I don't think they had ticking clocks in those days. Maybe they had a guy over there turning the hourglass over and over.

You'd clink. Ten minutes later, clink. And six times after the hourglass clinks, Nebuchadnezzar finally kind of runs out of patience and he says, look, Belteshazzar, don't let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.

I mean, you've been struck dumb for an hour here. Say something. Belteshazzar answers and says, my Lord, may the dream concern those who hate you and its interpretation concern your enemies.

He says, you're going to wish that this was happening to somebody else. But it's happening to you. Well, Daniel himself is appalled.

And this doesn't even concern Daniel. It concerns the king. But Daniel is so appalled he's dumbstruck.

We can be dumbstruck by events that overtake us. Hope in God, oh my soul. I will yet praise Him.

He is my rock. And you know what Daniel was doing during that hour? He was thinking the Word of God. He was cultivating the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

He was recovering from the shock of seeing the future and seeing the horrible thing that's going to happen to Nebuchadnezzar. And he had to sit there. Daniel, the greatest, wisest believer of his day, one of the three great ones that Ezekiel mentions twice in history.

And it takes Daniel an hour to stabilize his soul so that he can do his job and speak the

interpretation. So, we shouldn't be discouraged when we get thrown for a loop. But we've got to use the tool that God gives us.

God is our rock. He is our refuge. We know that from Psalm 91, don't we? We'll pause here and take a break.

When we come back, we'll see the implications and the fulfillment of the interpretation of this dream.