

Kings and Prophets 16-10-27a

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bookmark bookmark bookmark bookmark bookmark bookmark bookmark bookmark book We're the sheep of His lamb, just the sheep of His lamb. We're the sheep of His lamb, just the sheep of His lamb. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts.

He is the King of glory, the Lord God of glory. He is the King of glory, the Lord God of glory. Open our ears to speak Jesus, to speak Jesus, to speak Jesus.

Turn unto Him, look full in His eyes, and the things that are strange. Turn your eyes, look all into Him. Turn your eyes, most strangely, glimpses of truth be.

Place in my head, and set me silently down my way. Let me not die, leave me, open my eyes. O, my soul, O, my soul, O, my soul, O, my soul, O, my soul, O, my soul, O, my soul.

Good. Wow. This is Thursday, the 27th of October, 2016.

We're in the book of Daniel, looking at the prophet Daniel in the context of the Babylonian captivity. The northern kingdom, of course, went out in 721 B.C. with the Assyrians. The Assyrians have waned.

The Babylonians have waxed. And we find ourselves now in the times of Daniel, who served in the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar and a succession of lesser-known kings all the way down until the point we find ourselves tonight, which is Daniel chapter 5. This is Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall. Let's take a moment to go before the Lord in prayer and ask His blessing on our fellowship and our study, and then we'll begin.

Father, it is a wonderful recognition for us that we are not called to live the life that You require of us by our own strength. It is not by our might, not by our power, but in the power of Your Spirit. And we're so grateful to have that presence, which brings to us the presence of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

And through Him we have access to You. We're grateful for that privilege. We're grateful that we can come to You directly and represent ourselves under the auspices of our high priest, make our requests known, offer intercession for one another, and live our lives in the light of Your presence, Your power, Your Word, and Your Spirit.

We pray that as we study this portion of Your Word tonight, that the Holy Spirit will make it clear to us and enable us to not only understand it in its historical context and the meaning that it had in the ancient day, but its purpose in preservation and in rebuke and correction and instruction for us in the day in which we live, so that we can be good stewards of the time You've allocated to us, the opportunities and the potentials and the resources that You have apportioned to us, to live as members of the body of Christ, representing Him, and through Him, representing You on this earth. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's take a look at Daniel 5 and then we'll do a bit of analysis. You remember in chapter 4, of

course, it was the story of the scary dream Nebuchadnezzar had of the great tree that was chopped down, the stump protected by a band, and Daniel coming and interpreting that for him. And for seven years, seven times, he ate grass like an ox, the dew of heaven fell upon him, he lost his reason, and he was insensible to all of the privileges that pertain to him.

After that time, he was restored, and he says at the end of the chapter, at the end of that time, this is verse 34, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me. I suggested to you over the past couple of weeks that, like the book of Jonah, like many other things, these episodes and happenings with kings that have authority over Israel, over God's people, actually reflect in many ways their fate, their situation, and communicate things about them in much the same way that as we look at the entire Old Testament and much of what happens in the New Testament, it isn't directed specifically at us, but it is all recorded for us. These things are written for our instruction, and we learn by observation, interpretation, and application.

So you would expect that this isn't just kind of a cool story about the power of God to raise up kings and cut them low and restore them again, but that it would have pertinence and meaning and a warning value for God's own people. And of course it does. So it's not without significance in verse 34 when it says, At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me.

It's not the other way around. His understanding didn't return and then he lifted his eyes to heaven. He didn't reason his way out of his insanity.

What did he do? He did the same thing the demoniac did when Jesus landed on the far side of the sea in the region of the Gadarenes. He essentially looks to God. The demoniac just ran and fell at Jesus' feet.

He didn't come there as a result of a successful debate or a wonderful rationalization. He looked. He recognizes that God is the author of salvation and deliverance, and that is the basis upon which that recognition and looking results in living.

So he looks to heaven and his reason is restored. And as an object lesson or a parable, if you will, although it's real, for the people of God, what does this tell them? They too had enjoyed a wonderful prosperity and blessing and a wonderful kingdom with authority stretching to great extent to borders that were greatly enlarged under David and under Solomon. And through a heart being lifted up, which goes back to the original sin, Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, they too were cut down.

They lost not permanently, but for a season, for a period of time, they lost all of these things that had been given to them by God. Nebuchadnezzar is an object lesson. He's a story problem for the nation who is now cut down.

And you have the stump of Jesse with a band around it, and that band represents God's

promises that are sure. And there will be a root shoot from the stump of Jesse that will emerge, and eventually the kingdom will be restored to an even greater degree of grandeur and prosperity than it ever enjoyed before under the Lord Jesus himself, right? So that's what we saw in the previous chapter. Now, in chapter 5, Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in the presence of the thousand.

While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords and wives and concubines might drink from them. So picture the scene now. There are a thousand of these satraps and provincial rulers and authorities.

These would be everything from mayors and governors and factotae of every different shape, size, and description from all over the empire. And there are many other ancient accounts of great feasts where different kings would feed their subordinates. And there's one on record where there were 69,000 guests.

So a thousand guests is not necessarily an exaggeration or unusual. But notice who it is that drinks from these vessels now. They're not handed out to the thousand, are they? What is the weird idea that Belshazzar gets under the influence of this wine? And just so that you know, in verse 1, he drank wine in the presence of the thousand.

Verse 2, while he tasted the wine, he gets this idea and gives this command. And what is he going to do? He is going to drink wine from these goblets. So in verse 3, they bring the gold vessels.

Not necessarily goblets, they're vessels. They're all kinds of different vessels. I'll talk about that in a minute.

Every single verse mentions the wine. Now, this is not a diatribe on the evils of alcohol. Let me give you a few verses from Scripture about wine.

There is certainly a danger. And there is merit in eschewing the substance altogether. But the Bible does not forbid the drinking of wine.

Quite the opposite. In Psalm 104 verses 14 and 15, God makes grass grow for the cattle and plants for people to cultivate, bringing forth food from the earth. That's both the cattle and the plants.

People use both of them for food. Wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. All three of these, the oil, the wine, and the bread, the cattle and the plants, another two, all are said to be from God.

That's Psalm 104, 14, and 15. Ecclesiastes 9, verse 7, Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. And the idea is, He has approved what you do when you do this.

God approves when you eat your food with gladness and drink your wine with a joyful heart. Of course, you remember the admonition in 1 Timothy 5, 23, that Paul gives them, take a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent illnesses. But there are, of course, limits.

There is balance in Scripture. There are times when it is not a good idea to do any number of things. Romans 14, 21, It is better not to either eat food or drink wine or do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to stumble, to fall.

Skandalizo. And you would say, well, I can't do anything, because it says better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything. Well, obviously, it is doing these things when it causes someone to stumble.

So what does this tell you? Whatever you do, whether it is your dietary habits, your entertainment and relaxation habits, or anything else that you do, you should be, we should be aware of its effect on those around us. This is sensitivity. This is love for one another.

Be sensitive. There is a time and a place for some things. And if you know that someone either has a problem or a weakness or has a moral objection, even if you don't necessarily agree with it or think it's scriptural, sensitivity to others trumps all other reasons.

And Paul says it is better not. He doesn't say thou shalt not. He says it is better not to eat some kind of food or to drink wine or to do anything else that causes a brother or sister to stumble.

Who are the brothers and sisters? Fellow members of the body of Christ. That's who we are sensitive to first and foremost. And we are to look out not only for our own interests, but what? Also for the interests of others.

Let this mind be in you because that's the mind that was in Christ Jesus who didn't look out only for his own interests when he left glory, took on the form of a servant and came in the likeness of man. Why did he do that? He was sensitive to our needs. And he didn't please himself first.

There was no compunction or compulsion when he emptied himself and came to be our Savior, came to be our Passover, the sacrifice for our sins. He did it voluntarily because he was acting in love. Greater love has no man than to sacrifice himself on behalf of another.

1 Corinthians 8, verse 9. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. Now, this isn't a denigration, oh, well, they're weak. This is a recognition that there are those who may not understand what we understand, may not have the capacities or the strength that we've developed over a long period of time.

There's a variety of reasons why someone might be less able, less strong. And it's not a criticism to recognize that by doing a thing, by exercising what is a freedom and is my right, I may put a burden on someone who doesn't have the strength to bear it. Be careful that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.

1 Corinthians 8, 9. And a few verses further down in that same chapter, verse 13. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, now how would this happen? You remember in those days, there was a controversy about whether or not it was moral, kosher, if you will, to buy and cook and eat food that had been offered to idols. On the one hand, you say, well, this has been part of a ritual involving idolatry, and I want nothing to do with it.

I won't have that contaminated thing anywhere in my house. Understandable point of view. Someone else says, hey, it laid in front of a rock for an hour.

The rock is nothing. It's great meat. I'm going to buy it and eat it.

And that's understandable as well. If you truly consider an idol to be nothing, then laying a piece of meat in front of it for a little bit, so? If there was an actual God there, it might be a different thing. So two points of view, neither one of them driven by a strong scriptural imperative or an essential of the faith.

It's a lifestyle choice. It's a viewpoint. It's a matter of emphasis.

Are you going to emphasize the fact that it was part of a pagan practice, or are you going to emphasize the fact that the pagans don't know what they're doing and it just laid in front of a rock? It's a matter of emphasis. And there's a time and a place for a thing to be emphasized or de-emphasized. Classic example, mentioned it many times, Paul traveling with Timothy ensured that he was circumcised before they went to a Jewish community.

Paul traveling with Titus made a point of not circumcising Titus. Why? To make an issue of the fact that this is no longer required. There is a time for one and a time for the other.

Paul did it both ways. It depends on the context. So if what I eat, notice this isn't even talking about wine, you can do this with foods.

And if you're going to a place that is an observant Jewish family, it might not be that helpful to bring along your ham sandwich or your BLT. Be sensitive. If it is going to cause them mental attitude sins or difficulties, if it's going to interfere with your witness for Christ to make an issue out of that freedom before they have even figured out who the Lord Jesus is as their Messiah, then why raise a false issue? If it will cause them to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, Paul says.

If it causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I don't want to cause them to fall. Not only are there limits in terms of what effect it has on others and that we should be sensitive and aware and proactively making sure that it's not having a negative effect, but we have to guard against excess. Galatians 5, 19 through 21, the acts of the flesh are obvious, sexual immorality.

Sex is a great thing, but in the right time, at the right place, with the right people, person, singular. Acts of the flesh are obvious, sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage. This is uncontrolled temper.

This is lashing out, selfish ambition. This is the opposite of the sensitivity we just talked about. Dissensions, factions and envy, constantly picking fights, making a hobby out of arguments and trying to win them.

Drunkenness, orgies and the like. Drunkenness, this is an excess. This is taking a legitimate thing and pushing it too far.

Anything can become drunkenness in effect. Anything you do to excess means your life is out of balance. That's pretty much what excess means.

It's excessive, eating too much food, doing too much exercise. You can become a fitness junkie and exercise too much. If it begins to interfere with other responsibilities, if it eats into relationships, if it makes you too tired to do your job properly, Bible study can be done to excess.

I didn't immediately realize this and I used to binge study. I would study, study, study, study. I just enjoyed it.

It was great. I thought there's no such thing as too much of this good thing. Then I realized that there is.

How is that possible? How can you have too much Bible study? A. Knowledge puffs up. That knowledge needs to be working itself out in love. Love is what builds up.

We need enough from the Word of God to sustain our souls and equip us for every good work. Faith without works is dead, being fruitless, James says. The more you learn, the more you can believe and have faith in.

But we are designed to take in those calories and then burn them in good works, not just eat, eat, eat, eat, eat. Anything can be pushed to an extreme. Anything can fall under the rubric of drunkenness, entertainments of various kinds.

You can become a workaholic and your relationships and your spiritual life suffers. Anything that is normally good can become bad when it is pushed to excess. Romans 13, 13 and 14.

By the way, all of this, why are we looking at this? What does Daniel chapter 5 emphasize in its first three verses over and over again? Wine was at the heart and the root of this event. Even the goblets, the vessels, if you will, and when I say goblet, I'm talking about anything from a basin to a cup to a bowl to those implements that were used to catch the sacrificial blood and to pour it at the base of the altar. All of these had been in storage and they were all brought out and they were all used as wine cups.

There were people tipping big bowls up. There were people taking small dippers up. There were people using the measuring cups for the meal offerings and all of these different gold and silver vessels that were used in worship.

What was their proper use? Some of them were even used for wine libations. There was wine poured out on some of the sacrifices for God in the temple. And so they were actually wine cups.

But they were to be used in the presence of God to worship and appreciate God, to bring sacrificial recognition and honor to God. And instead, they're being used to bring recognition and honor to the family of Belshazzar. He doesn't hand them out to the nobles.

He and his wives and concubines are drinking from them. And his lords, his favored few that are up there, they're his inner circle. Romans 13, 13, and 14.

Let us behave properly, soberly, with self-control, as in the day, not in carousing, not in drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. And notice, strife and jealousy are included with these heinous, overt acts, which tells us that contentions and dissensions and divisions and splits, in God's view, are as dangerous as carousing, drunkenness, promiscuity, sensuality. Strife and jealousy have the seeds of just as much destruction as these other things.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. We certainly provide for the flesh. We eat food, we drink beverages, we exercise, we try to make sure we have good nutrition and the rest of it.

But don't provide for the flesh in its cravings, in its desire for excess or its desire for illicit pleasure, those things that are proscribed outside the boundaries. And these proscriptions and prescriptions are actually for our good. Is God just against fun? God is a God of the drudge and the sober and the downcast and the unsmiling.

You saw up above that the oil of gladness and the wine of joy and the bread of prosperity are gifts from God. He says, have these things with a joyful spirit. So why would He outlaw promiscuity and sensuality, carousing and drunkenness, strife and jealousy? The same reason parents make rules for their children.

You will hurt yourself. You will hurt others. You can destroy things.

You can ruin lives. Staying within these boundaries is the path to happiness, and it has been time-tested and proven over centuries. Nobody that respects monogamous marriage and anticipates it in their single life and is faithful to it in their married life ever got a sexually transmitted disease.

It has never happened. Why is that? Because following God's rules, in one generation, if everybody followed God's rules, all sexually transmitted diseases would cease. Why do they spread? Because people think they've got a better idea than the Lord God who designed us and made us.

Make no provision for the flesh with regard to its cravings, its lusts. 1 Peter 4, 3 and 4, you've

spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do. Notice they choose.

They're not trapped. I can't help it. I'm just a victim of my genes or whatever.

Pagans choose to do, 1 Peter 4, 3 and 4, living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless wild living and they heap abuse on you. If you live a sober and righteous life, you get derided and mocked.

You are scorned. You're vilified. You're outcast.

You're set aside. You're pushed away. Not necessarily a great loss there.

Proverbs 20, verse 1. Notice all of these though are talking about excess. 20, verse 1 of Proverbs. The wise understand the limits.

The wise have self-control. The wise are not led astray. If you're led astray by them, you're a dummy.

Isaiah 5, 22 and 23. We saw this in our extensive Isaiah study. Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine and men of strength who mingle strong drink.

We're the Olympic drinking team. I love to share my exploits and how raucous and wasted I got and how hammered we were over the weekend and what silly things we did because we were under the influence. It's braggadocio, hiding a healthy sense of shame at being so dumb.

Proverbs 23, 29 and following. Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns trying out new drinks. Do not gaze at the wine to see how red it is, how it sparkles in the cup, how smoothly it goes down.

For in the end, it bites like a poisonous snake. It stings like a viper. You'll see hallucinations and you will say crazy things.

That's the expanded translation from 23, 29 through 33 of Proverbs. Again, you don't get bloodshot eyes from a glass of wine with a meal. You get bloodshot eyes when you dwell in the tavern, when you make a hobby in an art form out of trying different things and different combinations, when you get with your friends and make comparisons and turn it into an occupation.

This is summed up by another criteria. We said one criteria is what effect am I having on others? A second criteria is am I indulging the cravings of the flesh and am I doing something to excess? Is this something that has control over me instead of me having control over it? At that point, eschew, stop, do the AA thing and teetotal. If it ever gains mastery, you can't afford that to happen twice.

If my eye offends me, I will pluck it out. If my hand offends me, I will cut it off. If I'd rather go into life minus that particular activity that is not essential, then keep it and lose my inheritance in the eternal future.

So another criteria besides those is where is the glory of God? Am I detracting from or failing to reflect the glory of God? And that's two different things. If it fails to reflect, I've gone from positive to zero. If it detracts from, I've dropped below zero.

At best, I'm not glorifying God in this activity and at worst, I am an enemy of the cross. I am a stumbling block to others. I am damaging the testimony of Christ.

As a member of the body of Christ, I'm not doing what I should to represent Him on this earth. What did He do when He was here? You've seen me, you've seen the Father. If people see us, do they glorify our Father who is in heaven or do they shake their heads and start making tsk-tsk noises? The glory of God, a third criteria, 1 Corinthians 10, 31.

Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, does that sound like a verse we had earlier, eating, drinking or whatever? If it causes my brother to stumble, I won't do it. In eating or drinking or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. That's uppermost in our minds.

Am I a credit to the God who sent His Son to save me, who purchased me with that costly price? Glorify God in your body. Colossians 3, 17. Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Whatever the activity is, wine is just an example here because it's in our passage. But whatever you do, whether it is in your conversation or in your activities, word or deed, can you do it in the name of the Lord Jesus? Can you dedicate this activity, this allocation of time, this expenditure of resources, can you say, in the name of the Lord Jesus? If the Lord Jesus was here, I think He would probably do this same thing. The Lord Jesus relaxed.

The Lord Jesus took time off from a busy schedule to reflect. The Lord Jesus had a sense of humor, but He never did anything to disgrace His Father. He never did anything to cause those around Him to stumble.

And His purpose was to do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10, 31. Colossians 3, 17.

Timothy, 1 Timothy 3, 8. Deacons, if you have any aspirations or function in terms of leadership, spiritual leadership, men of dignity, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, or fond of sordid gain, gain that is indecent. I'm making money just for the sake of making money. I'm gaining victories.

I'm gaining status. I'm gaining an advantage, whatever it may be. Addicted to much wine.

Titus 2, 3. Teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine. The very same standard that Paul gives Timothy in 1 Timothy 3, 8, he

gives to Titus in 2, 3 for men and for women. And notice that these are people in leadership positions, those who are looked up to, those who are in service functions.

1 Corinthians 6, 12. All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

If you find that you can't do without a thing, that's a good time to start doing without it. Titus 1, 7. An overseer as God's steward must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain.

Having an objective on self-satisfaction. All of those fall under self-satisfaction. Arrogance is feeling like everyone looks up to you.

Quick-tempered is trying to get a sense of justice in every situation. Drunkard, self-gratification and indulgence. Violent, gratification in overcoming those who oppose.

Greedy for gain, avariciousness. Of course, I don't have to remind you that in John 2, the Lord Jesus Himself turned water into wine. There's nothing evil, inherently wrong with wine.

It is when it impinges and crosses the lines in these guideline areas that we've covered. Well, that's what happens here in chapter 5. So, with that as an example, and keep in mind now, this is Belshazzar and he's a pagan and you'd expect him to do pagan things, but who is the message really for? It is for the Jews in captivity, seeing in someone else weaknesses is much easier than to watch for them in ourselves, right? Instead of somebody just wagging their fingers saying, thou shalt not, thou shalt not. How much better to observe someone fall through an abuse or a weakness or an excess and say, wow, I'm going to learn from that example.

If I'm going to make a mistake, I'm going to think up a new, fresh, original one. I'm not going to make that mistake. That is why this was put before the people of God.

In captivity, here's you a chance to learn. You don't normally see these pagans and their orgies and their festivals. Here's a chance to see what happens when they cross a certain line.

More about that when we come back from the break.