

## THE MAN WHO DID NOT CUT HIS NAILS

### THE MAN WHO DID NOT CUT HIS NAILS

The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: 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 (Dan. 4:33).

The Lord has always been engaged in the work of reclaiming men and women. Sometimes He failed as with Judas: with others He succeeded as He did with Saul of Tarsus. His life-changing efforts have been continued by rescue missions around the world. and it is informative to know that Jesus said: "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). The statement suggests that the heavenly hosts are aware of events taking place on earth and follow with interest every attempt made to redeem sinners. Even in the Old Testament era outstanding conversations were reported. Naaman. the captain of the hosts of Syria. was cleansed of leprosy and afterward said. "Now I know there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15). Probably the most sensational convert won for God in those ancient times never received the publicity he deserved. It took a long time for the Lord to change the life of Nebuchadnezzar. but the manner in which this was accomplished may be considered in six stages. God Witnessing... How Surprising

The king of Babylon was probably the greatest man in the world. He was a Gentile, and in the estimation of the Hebrews was unclean, for his ruthless legions devastated and defiled their homeland. Had anyone suggested he would become a worshiper of Jehovah. the notion would have been ridiculed. Yet the Lord had a special interest in that ruler and planned to win his allegiance. The story of his conversion makes excellent reading.

Daniel was a Hebrew prophet who lived among the slaves. He possessed a variety of gifts, and consequently his fame spread throughout Babylon. The king first became aware of the young prophet when his own magicians failed to explain a dream. Becoming infuriated with the incompetence of his subjects. he ordered their execution, but Daniel interceded on their behalf and succeeded in explaining the troublesome dream.

102

The king answered unto Daniel. and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts ... (Dan. 2:47-48).

As far as is known, that was the first time God succeeded in capturing the attention of the king of Babylon. Unfortunately his outburst was a spontaneous impulse. and it became necessary for the Lord to renew His efforts. When the three Hebrew boys were cast into the burning, fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and said. "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" (Dan. 3:25).

Once again Nebuchadnezzar recognized the purpose and power of the Almighty, but remained an idolater. He exclaimed, "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort" (Dan. 3:29). It was disappointing when he continued to worship idols and said Daniel's success was made possible by "the spirit of the holy gods" (see Dan. 4:8). He resembled the people of another age who "feared the Lord and served their own gods (2 Kings

#### THE MAN WHO DID NOT CUT HIS NAILS

17:33). Nevertheless. God never abandoned His efforts to win the heathen king. and that was truly surprising, for Nebuchadnezzar was a Gentile.

#### God Warning ... How Serious

The Lord seemed to be following the advice of the old adage. "If at first, you don't succeed, try, try again." Once more, the king sought the meaning of a dream. He had seen a great tree that appeared to reach the heavens. Then, a destroyer cut it down. leaving its roots in the ground. The monarch could not understand why the stump was likened to an insane man who lived among animals. Daniel frowned when he recognized the warning that God was giving to the self-reliant ruler. The great tree was Nebuchadnezzar, who was about to be humiliated and become as a beast.

This is the interpretation. O king. and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king. That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as

103

T

oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will (Dan. 4:24-25).

Fear, faith, and foolishness fought for mastery within the king's soul. He knew there were things to do but did nothing. He had received a warning from the God of heaven, but whether the man understood the full significance of the message may be debatable. He could have avoided a lot of trouble but was very stupid. When God speaks, wise men listen.

#### God Waiting... How Suggestive

At the end of twelve months (Dan. 4:29).

It was truly amazing that God waited for a year before permitting judgment to overwhelm that guilty ruler. Why did He wait so long? The Lord was waiting for the man to repent of his sins and accept the word of Daniel. Had these things happened during the year of grace. Nebuchadnezzar would not have lost his reason. This was the type of kindness shown to the people of Noah's generation. They listened to the preacher's warnings, but ridiculed him. They saw the construction of the ark, the arrival of the animals, and remained unimpressed. When the ship was ready to sail, there came a strange delay.

Then went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth (Gen. 7:9-10).

Jehovah waited seven days in the hope that people would respond to the preaching of Noah. An identical opportunity was given to Nebuchadnezzar. The apostle John sent messages to the seven churches of Asia, and emphasized that Christ was standing outside the door of the assembly in Laodicea. Perhaps the best way to understand this statement is to ask the question "how long has He been waiting for other people to respond to His entreaty?"

## THE MAN WHO DID NOT CUT HIS NAILS

### God Watching ... How Solemn

And at the end of the day I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation (Dan. 4:34).

At this part of the story the restored king gives his own testimony, Evidently he should have prayed twelve months earlier. The distressed monarch believed he had been forsaken by everybody. When his noblemen saw him eating with the cattle, they were astounded, He had lost his self-respect. The nails on his hands and toes had grown to be like the claws of an eagle. His hair had become matted and was as feathers clinging to his head. He was repulsive and obnoxious as he crawled among cattle to eat grass.

Sometimes it is easy to believe God has become indifferent to human need, Elijah exclaimed: "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kings 19:14), David, the fugitive, became despondent and asked: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" (Ps. 42:5), When disaster appears to be inevitable. God is never far away. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13), Probably, God was never closer to King Nebuchadnezzar than when the man lost his sanity, The prodigal son would have sympathized with the Babylonian, for they both shared the food of animals. The king ate grass; the prodigal stole pigs' food.

### God Working... How Splendid

And at the end of the day I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me (Dan. 4:34),

Apparently the Lord was watching intently; everything was proceeding according to His plan. It is impossible to probe the depths of a deranged mind, but evidently God was waiting for the man to "lift up his eyes unto heaven," Amid all the terrible fantasies that flooded Nebuchadnezzar's mind, suddenly, for a moment at least, light from the Sun of Righteousness reached his troubled soul, and God heard his whispered prayer. Many years later Jesus of Nazareth could have been considering these facts

105

when He said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33). Constantly, the Lord had been awaiting the moment when He would be able to complete His work. It would be wonderful to restore the king's sanity, but infinitely greater to eradicate idols from his affection.

### God Winning ... How Sublime

God does everything possible to help people, but unfortunately there are limits to His capabilities. John described the Savior as standing outside the door of the Laodicean church, knocking and seeking admission. How long did Christ continue knocking? The Savior cannot enjoy fellowship within the soul until He is permitted to enter.

Mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase (Dan. 4:36-37).

## THE MAN WHO DID NOT CUT HIS NAILS

If the king of Babylon ever became acquainted with the Hebrew Scriptures, one verse would command his attention and capture his affection, The psalmist wrote: "When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them, The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (Ps. 126:1-3), The redemption of that ancient monarch is one of the most thrilling accounts in the Bible: it is a monument to the grace of God that continually seeks the souls of lost men,

The king of Babylon would have appreciated the words of Dr, George Matheson:

O Love that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in Thee;  
I give Thee back the life I owe,  
That in Thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be,

106□

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.