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"Deliverance from the Prison of Insanity"

Dr. Mary Craig

There are times in people's lives that bring them to the brink of insanity and beyond. We may not personally see it as it is, but we can be introspective, self-centered, locked into our own thoughts, proud, puffed up, and on a collision course headed for destruction. We are definitely not in a mood to praise the LORD, rejoice in Him, and to hear that He is good.

Dr. Craig in Haifa; photo M. Murray

Nevertheless, let God be true and every man a liar. Pride puffs up. We are to resist the devil and his tactics and to humble ourselves before the Lord because God gives grace to the humble. Pride goes before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction.

You will need your Bible, particularly the Book of Daniel, to get the most out of this message.

Now back in the Book of Daniel we see in Daniel a life centered in the practice of perpetual praise, unconditional praise. Along with Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego, Daniel a/k/a Belteshazzar [Bel (Babylonian god) protect the life of the king], remained true to God as they refused to defile themselves with the King of Babylon's "royal" food. They chose instead to eat food pleasing to God and walk trusting God. At the end of their ordeal, they were rewarded with key civil service jobs in the government of Babylonia.

But I want to turn to King Nebuchadnezzar, a king who went insane and then was restored to sanity. Nebuchadnezzar became a powerful ruler because God selected him to capture Jehoiakim, King of Judah, and to lead the nation of Judah captive. Daniel 1:2. Remember, kings and nations are in the hand of the LORD. **Proverbs 21:1, 2 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turns it whithersoever He will.² Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD ponders the hearts.**

Lives of praise have their effect on kingdoms, nations, and the world system. They chose a diet for the purpose of and in order to please God; definitely not politically correct. They made their request and won the right to have that diet. Eating as they did in accordance with the Law of God resulted in improved appearance and energy level superior to those of the servants who feasted on the food provided by the king. Daniel 1:15. Thus they entered the king's service. The Faithful Four, as I call them, received advancement and greatness.

God is a God of providence. So, providentially, the heathen King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. None of his magicians could interpret it. King N. was a cruel person and ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon, including the Faithful Four. The Faithful Four prayed for mercy. This prayer resulted in Daniel receiving the interpretation of King N.'s dream. Daniel 2:19b-23 shows us what was in Daniel's heart and mind. It also shows us how we might praise. The faithfulness of the Faithful Four and their custom of persistent and unconditional praise opened mysteries. The King in his frustration did an insane thing, but as to the Faithful Four, God guarded their hearts and their minds. Daniel gave glory to God as he interpreted the

King's dream. Daniel 2:28, 36, 45. Persistent and consistent praise brought promotion. Daniel was raised to a high office at the royal court and the other three were promoted to administrative positions over the provinces.

High praise also brought satanic opposition. The devil wants that worship, you know. And so the king made this huge idol on the Plain of Dura and proclaimed a time of dedication. All citizens were commanded to worship this heathen image. At a designated and distinct moment, everyone was to fall down and worship or be put to death in a fiery furnace. The Faithful Four refused. For some reason Daniel was not included to be dragged away to the furnace, but the other three were brought before the king, who was furious with rage over their refusal to bow before his image. Into the fiery furnace they went. God worked a miracle as "One like unto the Son of God" appeared in the furnace. The king had been observing, watching all the behavior. There was a Fourth Man in the furnace. The king could see it all. The king welcomed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as servants of the Most High God. (Daniel 3:26-28) The word is "*barak*" and means "to bless." Praise had brought opposition, but ultimately praise caused a heathen king to praise the God of the Faithful Four as being Most High.

When praise vanishes, pride is the effect. All that King N. had seen and for which he had given praise to the Living God, brought him to decree that if anyone spoke against the God of the Hebrews, they would surely be cut to pieces and their property reduced to rubble. And listen to Daniel 4:2, 3.

Then King N. had another dream, one which foretold a dramatic setback. Daniel told the king of disappointment coming involving the loss of his kingdom and subsequent restoration. (Daniel 4:25-27) It all happened exactly as Daniel prophesied. A setback was prophesied, but also a restoration. Nevertheless...

Suddenly the king's praise for God ceased, vanished. Praise for himself took over and the king grew puffed up with pride. A year later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace, his heart and mind full of pride and boasting. (Daniel 4:30-32). God spoke and the words were fulfilled right then. Nebuchadnezzar went insane. He was struck by God with insanity. Insanity just spreads like a spider's web in an atmosphere without praise to the Living God. For seven years, Nebuchadnezzar roamed and wandered around the forests. (Daniel 4:33)

³³ 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.

But then praise had its effect on all the insanity. The king looked up! Let Nebuchadnezzar tell it as it is in the Word of God. Daniel 4:34-37.

³⁴ And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives forever, 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 the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?

³⁶ At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor 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.

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.

Something phenomenal happened; something amazing! The king's mind changed. Praise causes sanity being restored and the consequence of sanity restored. How can we keep our sanity? By the practice of continual praise. King N. prayed a prayer of praise, with recognition of God's exalted position as the Most High whose dominion is eternal. In the prayer was a recounting of God's eternal permanence (God's kingdom endures forever and over.) There was a review of God's efficient predominance in that God does as He pleases, and there was a reference to God's excellent power. (No one could hold back God's hand.)

There is no praise in an atmosphere where God is forgotten. There is no praise in insanity. Instead we have a lot of what we see in today's world: the poison of madness, cursing, depression, thoughts of self-destruction, minds veering into crookedness and perversion, and the work of the Holy Spirit hindered, denied, and mocked.

Jack R. Taylor notes: "As shocking as it may seem, a necessary admission here is: to the degree we engage in stubbornness, self-pity, jealousy, hate, bitterness, pride, arrogance, and anxiety—to that same degree sanity takes leave and the seeds of insanity are sown and take root...How prone we are to allow pride to stampede roughshod over our lives, unprotested and unchecked."

Repentance is a life-style. Deliverance is a life-style. Prayer is a life-style. Praise needs to be our life-style. When God has His place and we stay in our place, life returns to order and we remain sane. Praise puts God on the Throne, central at our core. Praise is a garment which neutralizes the spirit of despair. The spirit of heaviness is either a demon of heaviness or a human spirit dominated by defeat, failure, and despair, such that behind the sad, we look for the mad. This means we can be delivered from the prison of insanity. Isaiah 61:1-4.

61 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

² To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

³ To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

⁴ And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

When we forget, ignore, and/or disbelieve that GOD REIGNS, we open the door to insanity. The fool has said in his heart that there is no god. Colossians 1:28-31: ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being^[d] might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of Him^[e] you are in Christ

Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,
³¹ so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” ESV

The Apostle Paul was in prison for the faith when he wrote Philippians, the letter of joy. In it, he provides, under the superintending influence of the Holy Spirit, the way to maintain sanity in an insane world seeking to draw us into its madness.

Philippians 4:4-13:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. ⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. ⁹ Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last, your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. ¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Amen.

May you be found in Christ, kept and guarded by the power of the Holy Spirit working in you what is good, entering into Christ and dwelling in The Peace.

Praising Him Who is able,

Mary Craig

Mary Craig, D. Min.

I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Psalm 34:1

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The dove is there; look up! Photo by Rev. Jim Craig

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