Weighed in the Balances

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[0:00] For the preaching of God's word, let's read from Daniel chapter 5. Daniel chapter 5.! I'll be reading verses 1 through 16. This is in the ESV. Daniel chapter 5. Starting at verse! This is the word of God. King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. Belshazzar, when he had tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him. His limbs gave way and his knees knocked together. The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, whoever reads this writing and shows me its interpretation shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation.

Then king Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed. The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, O king, live forever. Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods was found in him. And king Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, you are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. We return to Daniel chapter 5 this morning.

We were here last week, and we've come to finish out this chapter this morning, and then Lord willing, we'll be in chapter 6 this evening. So let's come back together and go then into the lion's den.

But this morning, we're really picking up here in the middle of this episode in chapter 5. And we left off last week in our sermon outline having considered the first two sure truths from this passage. Now I told you last week that we'd work through the remaining three sure truths this morning, but being afforded a whole nother week and one hour, those three truths have grown to four, bringing our total then from chapter 5 to six sure truths. The first two that we covered last week were number one, God will not be mocked, and number two, examples should not be ignored.

[4:17] So let's pick up now with number three, the proud will be humbled. We've already seen something of Belshazzar's pride last week when we worked through the first 24 verses of this chapter. Here he was throwing this extravagant party and embracing all manner of sin, and the

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worst sin of that was flaunting his supposed power and authority in God's face, as though he had bested God, drinking from God's vessels, praising his own false gods as he did it.

This was such overt arrogance that we see at the outset of chapter 5. But there's certainly more pride that can be uncovered, even in how Belshazzar addresses Daniel when Daniel comes into his presence.
We just heard the first 16 verses read again by Sam. Look back at verse 13. Belshazzar says to Daniel, you are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah.
Do you hear how even immediately Belshazzar is putting Daniel in his place? Let's be clear, this is who you are. You are an exile. You are an exile whose nation was conquered by my kingdom. Who was brought to live in my city. You're a nobody, Daniel. You have no power. You have no authority. You have no influence. I'm the king. I'm in charge. You are under my authority. You are that Daniel.
[5:56] But I am king of this kingdom. Belshazzar is very dismissive of Daniel, showing yet again his pride. Well, even so he realizes, yes, but this exile can help me, so I've heard. I could use Daniel for my own self-interest. I need this writing on the wall, read and interpreted. And so he has Daniel brought in and he's saying, I hear that you can do it. So please do. Now I'm going to read the rest of chapter 5 for us here. Some of these verses we did look at last week, but we're going to continue to mine the depths of them again. So I'll pick up where Sam left off in verse 17.

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, let your gifts be for yourself and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation.
Oh, king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar, your father, kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples and nations and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed. And whom he would, he kept alive. Whom he would, he raised up. And whom he would, he humbled. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne and his glory was taken from him. He was driven from among the children of mankind and his mind was made like that of a beast and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until he knew that the most high God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.
And you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this. But you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven and the vessels of his house have been brought in before you. And you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know.
But the God in whose hand is your breath and whose are all your ways, you have not honored. Then from his presence, the hand was sent and his writing was inscribed. And this is the writing that was inscribed. Mene, Mene, Tekel and Parson. This is the interpretation of the matter. Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end. Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Perez, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.
[8:50] Then Belshazzar gave the command and Daniel was clothed with purple. A chain of gold was put around his neck and a proclamation was made about him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

That very night, Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed and Darius the Mede received the kingdom being about 62 years old. There are many ways that we see Belshazzar humbled in Daniel 5. The simple fact that he can't read or interpret the writing on the wall is humiliating in its own way. Belshazzar says multiple times, not just that he can't interpret the writing, but he needs it to be read, implying, I think, one of two things most likely. Either God had supernaturally kept Belshazzar and his wise men from reading the words that Daniel later says were inscribed in Aramaic, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parson, or that the writing on the wall was actually not written words using Aramaic letters, but simply symbols. Symbols that ultimately represent those words, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parson. Last week, we talked about kids' magazines. We talked about spot the difference activities that you might find in those kids' magazines. Well, you also might find sometimes those crack the code activities where symbols represent letters. You can see I really do thoroughly go through my kids'

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magazines whenever we get them. I love those crack the code activities. You get the answer key, or more technically, called the cipher, and it shows what letter each symbol represents, and you have a phrase or a sentence, and it's at the bottom of the page, but it's only in symbols. And under each blank, there you find the symbol.
So you would use that answer key with the cipher to figure out which letter to write on the blank above the symbol. And when you're finished, you've done it. You've cracked the code, and you can read the phrase or the sentence. Now, there's a more formal name for those kinds of puzzles. They're called cryptograms. It's possible that the writing on the wall is kind of like that. Not four words on the wall, but four symbols. And those symbols represent the four words, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parson. That would explain why Belshazzar would say, I need it read to me. It's just perhaps markings. You could see how this wouldn't be easy or simple. God was indeed giving a puzzle. In fact, both the queen and Belshazzar imply that this was more than mere words they couldn't understand when they both talked about Daniel and his qualifications. The queen, in laying out Daniel's qualifications to Belshazzar, she says in verse 12, that Daniel can explain riddles and solve problems. Then Belshazzar himself, when he brings
Daniel in, he praises him for what he's heard about him saying in verse 16, you can give interpretations and solve problems. So it seems this was perhaps a puzzle, a cryptogram, markings on the wall that needed to be deciphered. Now, I won't get into the weeds of what those markings may have been. If you want to talk after the service, we can nerd out on cuneiform together. We don't have time for that now, and the most important thing is what those markings mean, not how we get from the markings to the words necessarily.
And Daniel tells us, this is what is on the wall. And as always, it's only Daniel that can give it. The wise man of the kingdom, they can't read it, they can't interpret it, but Daniel can.
[12:40] Because time and again, we are reminded, Daniel is unique. Even the pagan people around him know, Daniel is different. And of course, we know the truth. He has the God of heaven on his side. And with God's help, empowered by God's spirit, with wisdom and insight that could only come from God, Daniel will both read and interpret the writing, which he does. Mene, mene, tekel, parson.

Now, those four words, two of which are identical, in their noun form, those four words actually convey currency. Their meaning, it represents currency. Very woodenly, those words would read, a mina, a mina, a shekel, and two half shekels. So it sounds like Daniel is talking about money.
But there's two layers of meaning here. Because those same words, not in their noun form, but in their verb form, they tell us something much more than just money. You may even have it footnoted in your Bible for you. Mene, in its verb form, means numbered. Tekel, in its verb form, means weighed.
And perez, in its verb form, means divided. But then as a plural noun, it can also mean Persians. We even hear it, parson, sounds a whole lot like Persians. So Daniel applies both meanings to then give us divided and Persians. So that's the reading, you might say, of the inscription.
Numbered, numbered, weighed, divided Persians. Daniel tells us what each word is and what it means. Now we might be tempted to say we've cracked the code, but we must see that Daniel now does what's most important in this passage. He brings home the message, the interpretation of it, very directly to Belshazzar. You see, to this point, yes, proud Belshazzar has been humbled in various ways.
[14:49] Can't even read the words. Can't interpret them. He's in the dark. But now the ultimate humbling comes as Daniel applies the interpretation very directly to this pagan king. So Daniel tells Belshazzar, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end. Daniel tells Belshazzar that he himself, Belshazzar, has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. And as a result, Daniel tells Belshazzar, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Oh, the message is crystal clear now.

Because of his unrepentant sin, his proud, hardened heart, Belshazzar will be judged. And that judgment will lead to the loss of his kingdom. And as Belshazzar will find out that night, to the loss of his life as well. And we see this judgment come so very quickly for Belshazzar. Just as Proverbs 6.15 says of the wicked man, calamity will come upon him suddenly. In a moment, he will be broken beyond healing.
So in his pride, Belshazzar exalted himself instead of exalting God. And that brings us to our fourth sure truth in Daniel chapter 5. The most high God rules over all. The most high God rules over all.

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This is, of course, like sure truth number three, a common theme in the book of Daniel. We see it come out here in chapter 5 in verse 28. Just one single small word given.
In our junior high and high school Sunday school class, we've been learning about reasons to read the Bible slowly, to take our time when we read the Bible. And we've been learning various reasons to do that. And here's one of them. You might miss something really big that is captured in just one or two little words. Something big in something small, like the word even given. Verse 28, it tells us that Belshazzar's kingdom was to be given to the Medes and Persians. Now, why given? Because the most high God rules over all. And that little word given reminds us of that sure truth. Yes, the most high God is the ultimate king. This sure truth that Nebuchadnezzar had come to see, to even confess in his own words, in humility, in humility back in chapter 4. You see there in verse 35, Nebuchadnezzar confesses, all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing. And he, that is God, does according to his will among the hosts of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Nebuchadnezzar had to learn that the hard way. We know. And he did. Daniel says in chapter 5, verse 21, the lesson that he had to learn was this, the most high God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. That is the lesson that these pagan kings in the book of Daniel repeatedly learn. Nebuchadnezzar learned it multiple times. We'll see tonight, Darius will learn that lesson as well. Well, now Belshazzar learns this right here in chapter 5. The most high God rules over all.
[18:40] And that same God who rules the kingdom of mankind rules over it. He also sovereignly gives Belshazzar breath. And he holds Belshazzar's ways in his hand. We saw that in verse 23 last week when Daniel said, you've praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath and whose are all your ways you have not honored. Also we see God's sovereign rule is over all things, what we might call the big things like kings and kingdoms down to the little things like the very breath in our lungs. The same God who moves the hearts of kings whichever way he wills like a stream of water in his hand, Proverbs 21.1 says, that is the same God who numbers every hair on our heads and holds our very lives in his hand as well.

And time and again, we see this sovereign God, the God of heaven, he's providentially bringing to pass in the book of Daniel all that he has ordained. Or to say it much more simply, like the catechism question, maybe kids, you know this one. Can God do all things? Yes, God can do all his holy will.
And that's exactly what we see happening in the book of Daniel. God is doing his holy will, raising up earthly kings and bringing earthly kings down, teaching them the king of heaven rules over all. And he's teaching us this lesson as we're in Daniel in rather subtle ways even, like words, very small words given to us. Give or gave or given or even received. Don't read Daniel and miss how God is showing his sovereign hand in all that is happening. In all the activity of man, we see God's hand at work. Like when Daniel reminds Belshazzar about the humbling experience of Nebuchadnezzar. In chapter 5, verse 18, Daniel says, O king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar, your father, kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. So how did Nebuchadnezzar get all of that?
Well, the casual observer would say, well, Nebuchadnezzar, he did a lot of conquering. He was a strong leader. He strategized well. He made the right moves to position himself in such a way. And it's true, he did those things. Oh, but don't miss this. God gave him whatever he had.
And Daniel goes on to tell Belshazzar, oh, all peoples trembled before Nebuchadnezzar. Why? Verse 19, because of the greatness that God gave Nebuchadnezzar. There it is. Whatever Nebuchadnezzar had, God gave. And guess what, Belshazzar? The same is true for you. Whatever he has, that's been given by God. So verse 26 tells us God has numbered the days of your kingdom. So that's telling us every day that Belshazzar has been king. It's who's doing? It's God's doing. He gave Belshazzar the kingdom and he'll take it as well. And what will God do when he takes the kingdom from Belshazzar?
[22:08] He'll give it to another. Remember verse 27, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. There's God's hand again, giving one kingdom of man to another man. Specifically, verse 31 says, to Darius the Mede. In fact, we find with Darius, passive language used again, that shows it was not Darius ripping the kingdom from Belshazzar in his own strength apart from God.

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No, he received the kingdom from God because God is the most high who rules over all. Now, I want to pause here and I want us to see something together. It's a pattern in the book of Daniel that Belshazzar breaks. You see, each time that God has dealings with a pagan king, and he does often in Daniel, he is teaching them this sure truth, that he is the most high who rules over all. Each time he's teaching them that truth, there's this pattern. Here it is.
Some kind of revelation is given or there's some kind of event. There's tension that follows and that tension is then resolved in some way. The pagan king then rightly speaks about God. He gives praise that is due to God. And then Daniel or his friends or both are promoted in the kingdom.
We saw that in chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar had that dream given by God. And then there's tension. No one can know. No one can interpret that dream until Daniel comes forward. And he does. So the tension is resolved. And Nebuchadnezzar speaks rightly about God. He gives him praise and then promotes Daniel and his friends. We saw it again in chapter 3. It wasn't revelation this time. It was an event that set in motion the tension of the chapter. Daniel's friends, they're refusing to bow down to the golden image. They are then thrown in the fire, but they're kept from harm. So the tension is resolved. And when they come out, Nebuchadnezzar gives praise to God and they are promoted.
Then again, chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar's second dream. Same pattern. Following the dream, Nebuchadnezzar, he's driven to live among the beasts of the field. He humbles himself before God in prayer. The tension is broken and he praises God. Though there's a small break from the pattern, there's no mention of Daniel being promoted. Skip ahead then to chapter 6 and we see this pattern play out one more time.
[24:51] Again, not a revelation given at the beginning, but an event. Daniel continues praying to God, which breaks the king's decree. He's thrown in the lion's den. There's the tension. God delivers him.

Tension broken. Darius praises God. Daniel is promoted. Now we come back to chapter 5. There's a revelation from God. The writing on the wall. No one can read it or interpret it. There's tension. Daniel arrives on the scene. He tells King Belshazzar exactly what the writing says, how it applies directly to his life. And for us, the tension is resolved. And then silence.
A deafening silence. What's missing? That pattern of the pagan king rightly confessing what is true about God. Belshazzar doesn't say a word about God. Belshazzar doesn't say a word to God. That element in the pattern is missing. He just skips it and he finishes out the pattern. He promotes Daniel.
Belshazzar fails to do what is most important. He fails to do the one thing above all other things that he should have done. Forget all the rewards. Forget the gift giving. Forget the promotions. Even Daniel says, I don't want that. That's all fine and dandy, but it's not what should be of first importance to Belshazzar. He should have humbled himself before God. He should have rightly confessed what is true about God to God. He should have learned from the example of Nebuchadnezzar.
We already saw last week. He didn't. So he ignored the vertical plane. And he only operated on the horizontal plane of relationships. He didn't say a word to God. The God who had spoken so very clearly to him in that writing on the wall. He didn't say a word in reply. A word of humble confession.
[26:56] A word of praise. A word of truth about God to God. He said nothing to him. He did not humble himself before the most high God who rules over all. And that very night he was killed.

A great earthly king so very shown to be not so very great by God. I can't help but think of the warning in Psalm 2 as we see Belshazzar's life here in Daniel 5.
Now therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way. For his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Isn't it ironic that this man who had trembled so greatly with fear not long ago, literally his knees knocking together, Daniel tells us back in verse 6, trembling with such fear that he relieves himself. When all was said and done, he did not serve the Lord with fear. He certainly didn't rejoice with trembling. He heard the message interpreted for him in the writing on the wall and he didn't turn to the Lord. He ignored him and he perished. That is a sobering reminder to those who are outside of Christ. If you are outside of Christ this morning, that is a sobering truth. For all who have not kissed the Son. That simply means for all who have not bowed the knee to him, forsaking their allegiance to sin, giving their allegiance to him. If they have not done that, they will perish. Oh, but for all who are in Christ, for all of us who are in Christ, oh, what blessings are ours? For we have taken refuge in Christ. We are safe. We are secure in him.

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And we joyfully serve the Lord then with fear and trembling. We joyfully bow the knee to God and we joyfully acknowledge what is true. The Most High God rules over all. He ruled over Belshazzar's life. He rules over my life. He rules over your life as well. This is a fitting passage for us even this week, isn't it?
We have elections coming and everything that Sam prayed, amen. We are to live wisely in this world. We want to see righteousness prevail. But don't forget, God rules over all and he does as he pleases and he is faithful to his people. Daniel is proof of that to us. So we live wisely and we entrust ourselves to him, the King of heaven. And what peace and what contentment and what joy is ours as we live humbly under his rule as his beloved people. You see, we keep an eternal perspective when we keep this sure truth before the eyes of our hearts. The Most High God rules over all. And that leads us then to the fifth sure truth to consider from this passage. And it's a contrast with the fourth sure truth. And that is this, the things of this life are fading. The things of this life are fading.
Look back at verse 29. Here in verse 29, Belshazzar gives one last command in this passage. And it's one last command recorded in his life. It's to reward Daniel. With the very things that Daniel had earlier said, no thank you, I don't need this stuff, I don't need this status. But Belshazzar, he thrust it upon him.
[31:06] He forced him to take it anyhow. He clothed him with purple. He put a chain of gold around his neck. And he promoted him to the third ruler in the kingdom. The highest position that he had the authority to give. And all of that lasted for hours. Because there was a regime change coming very soon.

Kind of like a coaching change. Say a football team gets a new coach. When that team gets the new coach, so often the new coach will clear house. And he'll say something to the effect of, I'm evaluating every assistant. And he may end up keeping one or two. But often he's shuffling up roles and responsibilities.
Even if he does, that's what we see with Daniel. The new coach, the new king comes in and he shuffles things up. So Daniel has these rewards given. And he held that position for one night. And then everything changes. Which is just this striking reminder to us. The things of this life are fading. What a contrast we see between Belshazzar and Daniel. Here was this Babylonian king partying it up on what turned out to be the last night of his life. And just like that, it was over. Psalm 49.12, man in his pomp will not remain. He is like the beasts that perish. Or maybe a well-known verse from the New Testament to parallel that. James 4.14, what is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Belshazzar had it all. He had power. He had wealth. He had influence. Every desire of his he could have satisfied. Many would look on that life and they would envy it. But not Daniel. Even when a slice of the pie was offered to him. He's like, no thanks. Keep it for yourself. Give it to someone else. I'm not interested. There's a real contentment that we see in Daniel, isn't there? Remember we saw this last week. Daniel was living in relative obscurity at this time in chapter 5. Now that hadn't always been the case for Daniel, but there had been some regime changes.
[33:38] Some new coaches had been brought in. So back in Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Daniel had attained great status. He had great influence. But now he doesn't have that status. He doesn't have that influence.

In fact, no one but the queen seems to even really know who he is. Belshazzar first meets him in chapter 5. But you don't see Daniel coming into Belshazzar's presence saying, finally, I'm getting the recognition that I deserve. Do you know who I am? Do you know what I've done? He doesn't come in demanding some apology for being ignored for so many years. When he speaks, he doesn't make it about himself at all.
Even though he's going to tell a story that very much involves him. He leaves himself entirely out of the account about Nebuchadnezzar. He could have drawn Belshazzar's attention to that. And he could have said, you know, I played a pretty significant role in that. I was the one who interpreted his dream for him. I was the one who called him to repent and he didn't listen and we saw what happened to him.
He could have said, I'm really someone special, you know. I've done some really remarkable things. But he leaves himself out when retelling how God brought Nebuchadnezzar low. Daniel doesn't have the same priorities that Belshazzar does. He was fine without gifts or rewards or even recognition.

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Daniel's example to us reminds me of Paul's words from 1 Corinthians 7.17. Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him.
[35:29] That's contentment right there. Whatever station in life God has called you to, be content in it. And that's exactly how Daniel was. So when God called Daniel to a high position in the kingdom during Nebuchadnezzar's reign, he was content to lead the life the Lord had assigned to him in that position. And then when God called Daniel to live in obscurity in the kingdom during Belshazzar's reign, well yet again, he was content to lead the life the Lord had assigned to him in that position. Isn't that rare? What kind of contentment do we find like that among men in this world?

People work so hard. They devote their lives to staying relevant, to staying in the public eye, to staying in the spotlight. They will find any way possible to keep their power and influence, to keep their name on people's lips. Daniel's content with the life that God has called him to.
His ultimate hope isn't in the things of this life. The passing pleasures of Belshazzar's party, the status of being highly ranked in the kingdom, that's not where his hope was found.
We see he had an eternal perspective, and that's a perspective that we should share. Setting our hopes on God, not on the hopes of the uncertainty of riches. Setting our minds on things above where Christ is seated, not in some kind of escapist way like you might hear of monks doing, but having the right perspective of this life, having the right perspective of this world even as we live in this present life, in this present world. Daniel understood whose kingdom he ultimately belonged to, even as he lived in the kingdom of men. He kept an eternal perspective. So the things of this world did not hold the same attraction for his heart as they did for others. Now there are so many things that we can enjoy in life. In fact, Paul says that in 1 Timothy 6-7, that God gives us many things to enjoy, but our hope is not set on the uncertainty of riches. Or you could say on the uncertainty of status or power or influence, even on the uncertainty of another day of life. Our hope isn't set on any of that, but on God. He rules over all. And as ruler, as judge, all will give an account to him. And that brings us to our sixth and our final sure truth this morning. We all will be weighed in the balances.
Verse 27, Daniel speaking to Belshazzar says, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.
[38:38] So he's telling Belshazzar, God has weighed you in the balances. He's put you, Belshazzar, on the scales. He's appraising him. He's evaluating him. Now what is God looking at? Is he looking at Belshazzar's great accomplishments as king? Is he looking at his list of achievements as the king of Babylon?

Is he looking at his wealth? Is he looking at his reputation? His popularity among the people? The number of lords that he can gather together for a party? No, none of that. He's looking at the inner man.
He's looking at the character of Belshazzar. Proverbs 16.2 says, all the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit. The Lord weighs the spirit. You see, that's what God is looking at.
Another way you could say that is the heart. Proverbs 21.2 is almost word for word the same as Proverbs 16.2. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.
The Lord weighs the spirit. The Lord weighs the heart. You see, what God's looking at is not the outer appearance, but the spirit, the heart of a man. And of course, the actions that flow from that heart, whether righteous or unrighteous, good or bad. 1 Samuel 2.3 teaches us, the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. Now, this idea of being weighed in the balances, that's actually a rather common way that people think about God's judgment of us, but they don't think about it the right way. They think of their good deeds being weighed against their bad deeds, and well, if their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, they get to go to heaven. But if their bad deeds outweigh their good deeds, then they go to hell. That's how many people today think about God and how he evaluates us. But if we think like this, we've got the standards all wrong. God is not weighing us against ourselves, somehow pitting whatever good I'm doing or have done against whatever bad or evil I've done. We've got the standards all wrong if we're thinking in that way. We very much have lowered the standards if we're thinking in that way. God's not weighing us against ourselves, but against himself and his perfect righteousness. His perfect righteousness is the standard. That changes the evaluation of everything.
[41:33] And we're like Belshazzar, in ourselves, apart from Christ, every one of us, we would all be found wanting when God weighs us. Deficient. Lacking the necessary righteousness to be right

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with God in ourselves. Even Daniel lacked that righteousness, that perfect righteousness.

Romans 3.10 tells us, none is righteous. No, not one. And again, Romans 3.23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That's really another way of saying all are weighed and found wanting. And yes, we all will be weighed one day, just like Belshazzar was. Paul says in Romans 14.12, so then each of us will give an account of himself to God. And again, Hebrews 4.13, and no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. There's no wiggle room in anything that God is saying to us here.
No creature is hidden. All are naked and exposed, and so all will give an account. Every one of us will stand before God and figuratively speaking, step up onto the scales. And only a perfect righteousness will do. No weighing good versus bad. Just weighing God's righteousness versus ours. And we have no righteousness in ourselves. But for us who are in Christ, we have another righteousness that will be weighed. We have an alien righteousness, a righteousness not of our own. We have a perfect righteousness that will be credited to our account by faith. We have our saviors. We have the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We have the righteousness of the one who never once broke a single law of God. And not only that, not just that he never disobeyed, but Jesus perfectly obeyed. He satisfied the righteous requirements of God's law for us. So he didn't do ever what God said not to do. And he did do always what God said to do. We have a perfect positive record of righteousness credited to us by faith.
Through his obedience, he earned righteousness for us. And it's that righteousness that then gets put onto the scales and weighed, and it will never be found wanting, brothers and sisters. Never. Make no mistake, this is of eternal consequence for us. Why? Oh, it's very simple. We all will die and be given, be held to account one day. We all will die and judgment will follow. That came for Belshazzar.
That very night that the writing appeared on the wall, and we know his fate, he was weighed and found wanting. Insufficient funds, lacking in a perfect righteousness that was needed. But not so for us in Christ. We have his perfect righteousness credited to our account by faith. We have already been declared righteous because we have a righteousness that is not our own. We have a righteousness that belongs to Christ, but is counted to us by faith. So that when we stand before God one day, we will not stand with our knees knocking like Belshazzar. We will not stand at all in the fear that Belshazzar stood in. We will never be described as Belshazzar would be described, as utterly humiliating as that is. We will stand with confident joy, with no fear of condemnation, because Christ was condemned in our place, because our every sin on him was laid, because our sin, not in part, but the whole, was nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord. If I could sing better,
[46:05] I'd sing it out for you like Pastor John, but there's no way I'm doing that. But the truth of the matter stands, our every sin on him was laid. He took it all for us, and then he gave his perfect righteousness in return. What a glorious transaction that is. What a glorious exchange. Our hearts, our appetites were wet this morning, even as we sang, even as we recited 2 Corinthians 5, 21. He took our sin, and he gave us our righteousness, his righteousness. Who would do such a thing? Who would make such a move?

Only a God who so deeply loves us, who would send his Son, who would willingly go to the cross for us. What a glorious Savior, who is then worthy of all praise.
Psalm 7, 17. I will give thanks to the Lord due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High. Amen.

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