

Chuck Smith:

Learning Important Lessons the Hard Way

- I. There are important lessons we need to learn in life.
 - A. God is determined that we should understand certain truths that He has set forth in His word.
 1. These are the basic truths or laws that will lead you to the good life that God desires you to live.
 2. Basically life is made up of things that will build you up, and things that tear you down.
 3. God has warned you about the things that destroy.
 4. He has set forth the things that enhance your life and lead you on the good path.
 5. One way or the other, because God loves you, He will see that you walk on the good path.
 - B. There is a easy way to learn, and a hard way to learn.
 - C. My advice is that you learn to learn the easy way.
 - D. The story before us is a classic example of these truths.
- II. Pride is a terribly destructive thing, God declared that He hated a proud look.
 - A. Paul said, "What do you have but you have received? And if you have received it, why do you act as though you did not receive it?"
 1. Any talent or ability that you might possess that is extraordinary, you have received from God.
 2. Of outstanding musicians we say they are gifted, and that is true.
 3. Many people are gifted in various areas, it is important to realize that these gifts come from God and He has purposed that they be used to glorify God, and any other use is to prostitute the gift.
 4. It is wrong to boast or brag about your gift, or to use it for your own glory and enrichment.
 - B. Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
 - C. Nebuchadnezzar was an extremely gifted man. His talents lay in the field of administration and leadership.
 1. He was a tremendous general, and had led the Babylonian troops in the conquest of the world.
 2. Having conquered the world he turned his energies to the building of the great city of Babylon with its massive walls and beautiful hanging gardens. There was nothing in the history of man to parallel the feats of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - D. He began to be lifted up with pride, and feel that the accomplishments were all of his own doing, he felt it was his brilliance, his skills, his abilities, that brought all these things to pass.
 - E. God warned him against taking the glory to himself that really belonged to God, by speaking to him in a dream.
 1. God had spoken to him in dreams before, when he was wondering about the future of his kingdom.
 2. It seemed as though he sought to defy that lesson that God had showed him in the first dream. The great image that he saw, had a head of gold, and a chest of silver. The Lord said that he was the head of gold, but his empire was to be conquered by the Medo-persians, which in turn would be conquered by Greece.

3. When he made the great image in the plains of Dura, he made it all of gold, head to toe, which could possibly be a statement that Babylon will rule forever.
4. It is interesting that this second dream was to show that God ruled in the kingdoms of man and gave them to whomever He willed. vs.25

II. The warning from God.

A. Oh the faithfulness of God, the king was getting on dangerous ground and the Lord gave him a dream to warn him of that danger.

1. Oh how faithful God is to warn us when we begin to tread on dangerous territory.
2. There comes that still small voice that says, "Flee, this is not the place for you." "Get out of this relationship, it can destroy you." "Don't do it, it is wrong."
3. That hesitation, that check in your spirit, it comes from God and is a warning.

B. God then sent Daniel to interpret the dream and advise him in taking the right course.

1. Daniel said to the king, "O King, let my counsel be acceptable unto you, and break off your sins by righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; that you might lengthen the days of your tranquillity."
2. God often uses the counsel of godly friends to turn us from our path of folly.
3. He was warned by God that he was on slippery footing, that he was being watched by the angels of heaven, God knew what he was thinking and doing. You cannot hide from God.

C. Nebuchadnezzar did all right for about a year, then one day as he was palace grounds looking at the splendor of the great city with its walls and gardens, in spite of the warning of God and the counsel of his godly friend Daniel, he said, "Is this not the great Babylon that I have built by my might and power for the honor of my majesty?"

1. It would seem that he had learned the lesson the easy way, he behaved himself for 12 months, but what is in your heart will eventually come out.
2. He must now learn these lessons the hard way.
3. We are told that he went insane. He was driven from men, and became like the beast in the field, he began to eat grass, he lived outside at night where his body became wet with the dew from heaven, his hair became matted and shaggy, and his nails grew long like claws.
4. Imagine seeing this once great king, who was so gifted and skilled, and imbued with such glory and power now bereft of his sanity living like a animal for seven years.
5. That's what I call learning an important lesson the hard way.

D. The Bible is a guidebook for life, it is filled with important lessons that we need to learn to live a happy, successful, prosperous life.

1. God loves you and desires that you live a happy, successful, prosperous life, and is thus determined that you will learn these lessons, one way or another.

E. Throughout the Bible we see illustrations of men who learned the these important lessons of life, some the easy way, others

the hard way.

1. Jonah learned the hard way that you cannot run from the call of God on your life.
2. David seemed to learn the easy way not to touch God's anointed, and do his prophets no harm. He respected the fact that God's anointing had rested upon Saul, and would not lay a hand against him.
3. II Kings 2 tells us of 42 young men that learned that same lesson the hard way. As Elisha, a prophet of God, was leaving town they began to taunt him saying, "Get out of here you old bald head." Elisha turned and rebuked them and two she bears came out of the woods and tore them up pretty good.
4. Peter learned not to boast in himself by a very bitter lesson.

F. God called Nebuchadnezzar his servant. If you are a servant of God, He will not let you get by with doing those things that can destroy you. Others may do them and get by with them because they are not His sons.

1. Many times we make this mistake, we see others getting by with it and we think that we also can get by with it.
2. The difference is that you are His son, He loves you, and for your own good He will not let you get by with evil.
3. We are told, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, for whom He loveth, He chasteneth."
4. If you are doing evil and getting by with it, that is a pretty good indication that you are not a son.
5. You will one day learn your lesson the very hard way in hell, but there will be no possibility for recovery.