

# God Holds Your Breath in His Hand

Do you understand the control that God has over your life?

Daniel 5

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • August 19, In the year of our Lord, 2018

Scripture Reader and Reading: Carl Peugh – Daniel 5.1–4

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Phil Joseph – Songs on Praising God

## Prelude:

### I. Did you know that the expression

- A. “I saw the handwriting on the wall,”
- B. is rooted in the Bible?

### II. Before we get to that,

- A. imagine breathing into your hand and then closing it.
- B. A moment later you open your hand and your breath vanishes.

## Persuasion:

### I. Daniel 5.1–4 – Using God to Praise False Gods

**1** Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. **2** 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, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. **3** Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. **4** They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone (Dan 5.1–4).

- A. Belshazzar scoffed at the idea that Jehovah God rules over all.
- B. This was Belshazzar’s way of showing his superiority over
  - 1. the Jews and the superiority of his gods
  - 2. over the one true and living God.

### II. Daniel 5.5–9 – Knee-Knocking Fear

**5** In the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote opposite

the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6 Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other. 7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." 8 Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished (Dan 5.5–9).

A. Belshazzar's behavior offended the God of heaven.

1. It is not a good idea to offend the One
2. who has control over your life!

B. The appearance of the fingers of a man's hand and

1. what that hand wrote
2. symbolized something that we will see shortly.

### III. Daniel 5.10–12 – Soothing a Troubled Spirit

10 The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. 12 Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation" (Dan 5.10–12).

A. Like the butler remembering Joseph,

1. so the king's wife remembered Daniel, and
2. like Pilate's wife offered a recommendation.

- B. Apparently Daniel was not part of the wise men anymore.
- C. Moreover, the excellent spirit in Daniel was well known, but
  - 1. the king ignored him
  - 2. to the king's detriment.

#### **IV. Daniel 5.13–16 – The Capability of Daniel**

**13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14 I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. 15 Now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. 16 And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. 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" (Dan 5.13–16).**

- A. Belshazzar did better than Pilate and
  - 1. listened to his wife and
  - 2. summoned Daniel.
- B. Belshazzar's desperation for having seen the handwriting on the wall
  - 1. is obvious by his offer to the prophet.
  - 2. It was a life-changing experience, but
    - a) it was too late for the king.

#### **V. Daniel 3.17 – The Humility of Daniel**

**17 Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation" (Dan 5.17).**

- A. Daniel had no desire to receive the gifts of the king, because
  - 1. the prophet was not in the ministry

2. to see how much fame and fortune he could build up.

## VI. Daniel 5.18–22 – Belshazzar Did Not Like History in School

**18 “O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. 19 And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. 21 Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. 22 But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this” (Dan 5.18–22).**

- A. God is the One who gave Nebuchadnezzar the kingdom,
  1. so God was the One who could remove it.
  2. God punished the king until he knew that God runs the show.
- B. Belshazzar did not learn that lesson of history.
  1. Remember, “Those who do not learn the lessons of history are bound to repeat them.”
  2. I once told a Christian that I liked the Book of Ecclesiastes because
    - a) I was able to learn from Solomon’s mistakes, but
    - b) this brother said that he would rather learn from his own mistakes.
      - (1) Belshazzar shows that this brother’s philosophy was not good.
      - (2) Learn from Solomon, learn from Belshazzar.

## VII. Daniel 5.23 – Who Controls Your Life

**23 “And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house 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, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; *and the God who holds your breath in His hand***

***and owns all your ways, you have not glorified” (Dan 5.23).***

A. It is a sin to fail to glorify God and Daniel shows why:

1. God holds your breath in His hand.
2. He owns all your ways.

B. Even as you might hold your breath in your hand,

1. so God holds your breath in His hand.
  - a) Even as you easily let go of your breath,
    - (1) likewise the God of heaven can
    - (2) let go of your breath.
  - b) God just has to let go and
    - (1) you stop breathing and
    - (2) your life is no more upon the earth.
      - (a) People say we are just one heart beat away from death.
      - (b) We are just one opening of God’s hand away from death.

2. Genesis 2 shows what gave man life was the breath from God:

**7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*; and man became a living being (Gen 2.7).**

3. Acts 17 has a speech that Paul delivered in Athens, and

- a) he shows the folly of worshiping idols and
  - (1) the wisdom of worshiping the one true God,
  - (2) who is Creator over us all, by saying:

**25 “Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, *since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ... 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’” (Acts***

**17.25, 28).**

- (3) God does not lack that He needs our help,
  - (a) Paul argued that God is the One who gives us our breath,
  - (b) our existence comes from Him.
- (4) Your diaphragm moves up and down,
  - (a) fills your lungs with air, and
  - (b) your blood passes through your lungs,
    - i) making a vital exchange,
    - ii) releasing carbon dioxide into the lungs and
    - iii) taking oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body.
  - (1) God alone created this amazing process, and
  - (2) He alone sustains the process.
- (5) He took the dust of the ground and
  - (a) made a man;
  - (b) then breathed into the man the breath of life.
    - i) All in a moment one day!
    - ii) Stand in awe at the indescribable power of God!
- 4. Genesis, Daniel and Acts show the image of life symbolized by breath
  - a) rather than a beating heart, or
  - b) brain waves,
    - (1) probably because breathing
    - (2) is one of the most obvious signs of life.
- 5. This all shows the ease with which our lives continue or end.
  - a) How easily do you hold something in your hand?
  - b) How easily do you release it?

(1) So it is with our breath in the hand of God.

6. God blows your breath into you,

a) He blows it into His hand,

b) shortly He releases it.

(1) Are you ready for God to release your breath?

(2) He is giving you time now

(a) to prepare yourself

(b) for when He does release your breath and

i) you proceed to the next step in your existence,

ii) experiencing the Judgment of God.

C. God owns all your ways.

1. If God created you from the dust of the earth,

a) if He breathed into your nostrils the breath of life, and

b) if He continues to hold your breath in His hand,

(1) logically He who owns all your ways.

2. To say that God *owns* all your ways

a) is to say that He *knows* all your ways.

b) Psalm 139 shows just how intimately

(1) God knows and owns

(2) each of us and our ways:

**1 O LORD, You have searched me and known me.**

**2 You know my sitting down and my rising up;  
You understand my thought afar off.**

**3 You comprehend my path and my lying down,  
And are acquainted with all my ways.**

**4 For there is not a word on my tongue,  
But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.**

**5 You have hedged me behind and before,  
And laid Your hand upon me.**

**(Psa 139.1–5)**

- c) Is not Daniel 5 evidence of this truth?
  - (1) God knew all the ways of Belshazzar,
  - (2) which is why God condemned the king.
- 3. God owned all the ways of Belshazzar
  - a) whether he recognized it or not.
  - b) Likewise, God owns all your ways,
    - (1) even if you do not acknowledge it.
      - (a) Everything that you own and
      - (b) everything that you do and
      - (c) everything that you are,
        - i) God owns.
        - ii) Are you glorifying God with your ways?

**VIII. Daniel 5.24–31 – God Let Go of the Breath of Belshazzar**

**24 “Then the fingers {Literally palm} of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written. 25 ‘And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, {Literally a mina (50 shekels) from the verb “to number”} MENE, TEKEL, {Literally a shekel from the verb “to weigh”} UPHARSIN. {Literally and half-shekels from the verb “to divide”} 26 This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; 27 TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; 28 PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” {Aramaic Paras, consonant with Peres} 29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old (Dan 5.24–31).**

- A. Why did God use a language that the king did not know?
  - 1. God used a variety of communication,



- a) to show people that it is not the method itself, but
- b) the message.
- 2. Moreover, this would give Belshazzar contact with Daniel,
  - a) showing the king that he should have had contact
  - b) with Daniel the whole time.
- B. To show how easily God could let go of the breath of Belshazzar,
  - 1. the king died that very night.
  - 2. First Samuel 2 shows why a man like Daniel continued, but
    - a) why a man like Belshazzar was shamed,
    - b) when a man of God said to Eli the high priest:

**30 “Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: ‘I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.’ But now the LORD says: ‘Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.’” (1Sa 2.30).**

### **Exhortation:**

#### **I. If you have fallen into the same sin as Belshazzar,**

- A. repent!
- B. Do you honor God?
  - 1. Or do you despise Him?
  - 2. Or are you just neutral (which is the same as despising Him)?

#### **II. Remembering**

- A. that God holds your breath in His hand and
- B. that He owns all your ways,
  - 1. will bring peace to you.

#### **III. Glorify Him today by faith and obedience.**