

Daniel 2:19-23

19 Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

20 Daniel answered and said:

*“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
For wisdom and might are His.*

*21 And He changes the times and the seasons;
He removes kings and raises up kings;
He gives wisdom to the wise
And knowledge to those who have understanding.*

*22 He reveals deep and secret things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And light dwells with Him.*

*23 “I thank You and praise You,
O God of my fathers;
You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what we asked of You,
For You have made known to us the king’s demand.”*

Thus far in Daniel we have discussed the deplorable spiritual condition of the Nation of Israel at the time that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Abednego were carried off into captivity to Babylon. Their leaders had been either puppet kings to other nations, or they had been as the Scripture describes them “their evil had surpassed the nations around them.” At the time of the carrying away of Daniel and his companions, probably around 600 B.C. there King had been carried off into captivity and the entire nation of Israel was in shambles. When Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city, he took the best of their young men away to Babylon.

Daniel and his friends had been put to the test right away. As they were being prepared for service for the Chaldeans we read that Daniel had purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself and he and his companions stood faithful to the Lord and they were after the time of trial found to be ten times better than any of the others that were being educated.

But soon after this they are put under another trial. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that bothered him greatly, and so he called his wisemen from all over the Kingdom to interpret the dream, but interpreting the dream was not enough, they also had to tell him what it was that he dreamed. Nebuchadnezzar believed that if they were truly wise. If they were truly gifted, not only would they know the interpretation, they would also know the dream itself. If they could not tell him the dream and the interpretation, then they would be put to death.

I mentioned last week that Daniel and his friends had gone from the frying pan straight to the fire. It is important that we remember, Daniel was in captivity through no fault of his own, and Daniel was now in a dire life and death situation, through no fault of his own, but we don't see him complaining, we don't see him decrying the unfairness of it all, in fact we last week saw Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah taking everything to the Lord in prayer. Daniel, as I have mentioned before had an accurate view of the providence of God. He knew that he was exactly where God wanted him to be, and he knew that God's glory was the end matter of the problems that he was facing, and so last week as we closed we saw these young men going to the Lord in prayer for the answer to their dilemma.

The first thing we see in the text today is that the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. We don't absolutely know what this was. Was it a dream? Was it waking vision? It is amazing how many pages the commentaries spend talking about this answer. The thing we really need to see is that God revealed the answer to Daniel. I have often thought, why Daniel? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had all prayed and yet Daniel received the dream and the interpretation.

Gary Preston in his book "Forged from Conflict" tells this interesting story:

Back when the telegraph was the fastest means of long-distance communication, there was a story, perhaps apocryphal, about a young man who applied for a job as a Morse code operator. Answering an ad in the newspaper, he went to the address that was listed. When he arrived, he entered a large, noisy office. In the background a telegraph clacked away. A sign on the receptionist's counter instructed job applicants to fill out a form and wait until they were summoned to enter the inner office.

The young man completed his form and sat down with seven other waiting applicants. After a few minutes, the young man stood up, crossed the room to the door of the inner office, and walked right in. Naturally the other applicants perked up, wondering what was going on. Why had this man been so bold? They muttered among themselves that they hadn't heard any summons yet. They took more than a little satisfaction in assuming the young man who went into the office would be reprimanded for his presumption and summarily disqualified for the job.

Within a few minutes the young man emerged from the inner office escorted by the interviewer, who announced to the other applicants, "Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, but the job has been filled by this young man."

The other applicants began grumbling to each other, and then one spoke up saying, "Wait a minute—I don't understand something. He was the last one to come in, and we never even got a chance to be interviewed. Yet he got the job. That's not fair."

The employer responded, "I'm sorry, but all the time you've been sitting here, the telegraph has been ticking out the following message in Morse code: 'If you understand this message, then come right in. The job is yours.' None of you heard it or understood it. This young man did. So the job is his."

Just as the seven young men could not understand what the telegraph was ticking, sometimes people don't understand what God is saying when he speaks to them. God was speaking to king Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, but he could not understand what God was saying to him. God providentially had prepared Daniel for such a time as this, and not only Nebuchadnezzar, but Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as well as the other wisemen, were all spared because God had prepared Daniel to be the recipient and the interpreter of this message.

I have for a long time loved the Book of Daniel. I love his courage, I love his faithfulness to God, and I am absolutely fascinated by the dreams and the prophecies and their interpretation in this Book. And I know myself enough to know that I would probably be extremely disappointed in your pastor this morning, because in spite of the fact that God gave Daniel the dream, and the interpretation, we are not going to talk about that today. Instead what we are going to look at is the way in which these men responded to God's gracious answer to their prayers.

Daniel, like many of us found himself in a dilemma, and there was, at least in human understanding no way out of it. We spoke about this last week. In the pages of Scripture there are people who interpret dreams. Yet, nowhere had anyone ever before interpreting the dream also told the dreamer what it was that they had dreamed. I mentioned that Nebuchadnezzar was being unreasonable, to say the least. But Daniel knew that there was a God in heaven who could not only interpret the meaning of the dream, he could also reveal what the dream itself was.

Daniel was a wise man. We read that he was ten times more excellent than all of the other wise men in Babylon and yet, to tell the dream was beyond him, and so his first response, after speaking to the King and asking for time, was to go God in prayer. I briefly mentioned this last week, but Daniel did not pray alone He gathered his friends and together they prayed to the God of heaven that he would reveal to them the dream. The word describing Daniels companions is from the Hebrew Khabar which means to tie a knot or to join together. These young men were joined in purpose and it was in that way that there prayers were lifted before God.

When they prayed before God, God heard their prayer and he answered. When we have prayers that are answered this is a time of rejoicing, but I want you to notice the first thing we read as the response of these young men to the answer to their prayer was that they offered praise and thanksgiving to God.

As soon as the prayer had been answered we read that “Daniel blessed the God of heaven.”

It is a funny thing, but we are a needful people. We have so many needs and we often take our needs and our concerns to God in prayer. We may have financial worries, relationship problems, illnesses, we may need guidance or direction, the list goes on and on, and according to Philippians 4:19, *My God shall provide all of our need according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus.* And yet, our tendency is to come through the other side of a crisis, where God has made a way for us and rather than acknowledge Him we take credit ourselves, or we simply thank the stars because we lucked out. Daniel’s reaction is a marvelous lesson for all of us, He blesses God.

I am reminded of the story in the Gospel of Luke 17. Many of you are familiar, but there were 10 men who cried to Jesus from a distance because they had leprosy, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” Listen to what happens in verses 14-19:

¹⁴ So when He saw them, He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

¹⁵ And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, ¹⁶ and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? ¹⁸ Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”

Sadly, this 9 to 1 ratio is probably far more accurate than we care to imagine. There are countless warnings throughout the Old Testament, particularly in the Book of Deuteronomy, warning the people of God to “Be careful that they forget not the Lord your God.” We are all familiar with the all too common prayer, “God if you get me out of this mess, I will... etc. etc. etc.” Of course, when God answers we all too often forget to glorify and thank Him for what He has done for us.

In Romans 1:18-21 where the Apostle Paul explains the wrath of God that is poured out on all ungodliness he describes it this way: *¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, **nor were thankful**, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

Of course, this text goes on and describes what this futility of thinking looks like, and it is not at all a pretty picture, but I want you to notice that the cause of all of these things is a heart that refuses to acknowledge God and is not thankful to God.

Before Daniel went to the King to let him know that he had the answer to his dilemma, before he saved his own neck, Daniel blessed God.

I want you to listen to this prayer that these young men offered to God after God had revealed this mystery to them. Many have asked the question, How do I pray? How do I give thanks to God? Well, we have a model of that here recorded for us in the pages of Scripture.

*“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
For wisdom and might are His.
²¹ And He changes the times and the seasons;
He removes kings and raises up kings;
He gives wisdom to the wise
And knowledge to those who have understanding.*

*²² He reveals deep and secret things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And light dwells with Him.
²³ “I thank You and praise You,
O God of my fathers;
You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what we asked of You,
For You have made known to us the king’s demand.”*

I read this prayer over and over this week. What a magnificent picture of who God is and what God does. In this prayer of blessing and thanksgiving we learn quite a few things about God, but it is also in this passage that we really begin to see a picture of Daniel and how He saw God and how he praised God. Charles Spurgeon said it this way, *“Praise is the honey of life which a devout heart extracts from every bloom of providence and grace.”*

Daniel goes to the Lord in prayer at the beginning of a crisis, and after he has gone through the trial, he gives all the glory to God. You see praise is the antidote we all need in our battles with pride. When God works there is no room for pride—only praise. We need to let go of our pride and give praise to God. There is great power in praise.

We must always remember the overriding truth taught in both the Old and the New Testaments, that ... *“God resists the proud but he gives grace to the humble.”* Praise is the antidote for pride.

But we must also notice the attitude of Daniel before his prayer was answered. To his mind there was no solution and yet Daniel truly trusted God.

James 1:5-8 tells us ⁵ *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.* ⁶ *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.* ⁷ *For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;* ⁸ *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

What kind of prayer is this where we can ask in faith with no doubting? It is a prayer of a man or a woman who has tuned into the will of God.

My Great Grandfather was a Godly man who was known by all who knew him as a man of prayer. I know he got up every morning before the sun and he prayed through a little prayer book that he had put together. If you met him, you were probably in that book. He understood the power of prayer. But I can also remember there were times when he prayed with me or for me, and when we were done praying he always reminded me of the importance of blessing God and praising God for the answers to our prayers. One of the things I learned from Pappy Dad, that's what I called him, was that the measure of spiritual maturity does not lie only in the fervency of our prayers, but also in our response of praise and blessing to God, even before we may realize the answer.

John Calvin writes about this passage this way: *“As God, therefore, shewed himself propitious to the prayers of Daniel, we conclude him to have prayed with true faith, and to be fully persuaded that his life was in God's hands; hence, also he felt that God did not vainly harass the mind of King Nebuchadnezzar, but was preparing some signal and remarkable judgment for him. Because Daniel was imbued with this firm persuasion, he exercises a sure confidence, and prays to God as if he had already obtained his request.”*

We have all heard that a prayer life is important, I think we learn from Daniel and from much of Scripture that praise and thanksgiving is equally important. In fact, if you have one without the other, you are negligent.

Hebrews 13:15 tells us: ¹⁵ *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.* Notice the command to be continually giving praise.

The last thing I want us to see in this passage is the content of Daniel's prayer. True, Daniel did pray for he and his friends and the other wise men of Babylon, but at his focus was a deep and abiding trust in the will of God.

His prayer begins:

*"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
For wisdom and might are His.*

I am struck that when Jesus taught his disciple to pray, He began with *"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."* Very often our prayers are prayers of self interest. This is certainly to be understood. Notice, however, at the heart of Daniel's praise to God is the honoring and blessing of the name and majesty of God.

Daniel goes on:

²¹ *And He changes the times and the seasons;
He removes kings and raises up kings;
He gives wisdom to the wise
And knowledge to those who have understanding.*

Perhaps in Daniel's response of praise we get the first hint of the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Many of you know the dream already, but the dream was a dream detailing the upcoming future of the nations of the world and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Daniel recognizes and emphasizes that it is God who changes seasons and times, it is God who removes and raises up Kings and Kingdoms, and Daniel blesses God because true wisdom can come only

from God, and he rightly understands that anything that detracts from the wisdom and majesty of God is foolish and depraved.

It is interesting that we today very often believe that the weather is “random.” We believe in random events and chances. Daniel’s prayer showed his absolute trust in God who is behind the changing seasons. It is God who is behind the rise and fall of the nations of the world. God is working all things for His glory and Daniel was keenly aware, and I will say we forget this or neglect this to our harm.

All things that happen, happen for His glory, and Daniel is full of praise to the creator of Heaven and Earth. Again, here what John Calvin says of this verse: He says much more but listen to these words: *“we are not to seek in heaven alone for God’s wisdom and power, since it is also made apparent to us on earth as proofs of it are daily presented to our observation.”* Amen.

*²² He reveals deep and secret things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And light dwells with Him.*

Man is an inquisitive creature? We have many questions and we come up with many answers. I am not saying we should not investigate mysteries. But very often we study to know the mysterious, deep and secret things, and in doing so we neglect to praise and give honor to our maker, who we are told knows what is in darkness and light dwells with Him. I again quote from Calvin: *“Let us learn from this passage to attribute to God that praise which the greater part of the world claims to itself with sacrilegious audacity. ...Whatever understanding or judgment we may possess we should remember that it was first received from God.”*

*When Daniel prays that God knows what is in darkness and light dwells with Him, we must supply a tacit antithesis; since he indicates that men are surrounded by thick darkness, and grope about in obscurity. In 1 Timothy 6:15-16 Paul writes of Christ, “ He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, **dwelling in unapproachable light**, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.”*

And now the conclusion of Daniel's prayer:

*²³ "I thank You and praise You,
O God of my fathers;
You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what we asked of You,
For You have made known to us the king's demand."*

How do we respond to God who provides all of our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus? We are to respond with praise and thanksgiving to God alone. We must always be mindful that it is God who has placed us in the times that we live. He has placed us here for His glory, and it is He alone who gives us wisdom and might that we might give thanks, and praise and glorify Him.

Let us Pray:

Father in Heaven, we have so many testimonies to you glory that are daily before us. We are often blind and shut out your light by our un-thankfulness and ingratitude. We pray that we might learn to open our eyes to all that you have done for us and all that you do for us. Cause us to reflect on the number, the magnitude, and the importance of the many blessings you have given us. Teach us to praise you for the many virtues you have given us until nothing remains but to extol you alone. Teach us to devote ourselves to you without reserving the slightest self-praise, that your glory may be all that shines through to the world, we pray all these things through Christ our Lord. Amen.