



THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL

Lesson Number 6

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version, BBE=Bible in Basic English, DRA=Douay-Rheims KJV=King James Version, NKJV=New King James Version, NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible, NAU=New American Standard Bible 1995, NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version, NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version, RSV=Revised Standard Version, YLT=Young's Literal Translation.

----- *Bible Translation Codes with Identification* -----



THE HANDLING OF A LIFE-THREATENING CRISIS

Dan 2:13-21 **13** And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain. **14** Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: **15** He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. **16** Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation. **17** Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: **18** That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ^{KJV}

(Daniel 2:13-18)

INTRODUCTION

The stage has been set for the unveiling of Daniel, the man chosen by God to reveal Divine determinations to the sons of men. These preparations did not involve Daniel sitting at the feet of a renown Hebrew scholar. His immediate formal education was at the feet of heathen Babylonians. In his conventional training, he was not taught the Law of

God, but the language and literature of the Chaldeans. His preparations were not accomplished in the Temple of God, but in a Babylonian school for captive eunuchs, under the authority of a Babylonian prince and one of his special subordinates.

He was living during a period of fierce and unparalleled Divine chastening.

The revealed religion of his people had been held in disdain. The commandment of God had been disobeyed, thus incurring His indignation. The house of God, once filled with the glory of God, had been destroyed. The city of God, where He had chosen to place His name, had been devastated. The nation who once came out of mighty Egypt with great spoil, had

OUTLINE

- ▶ **CAUGHT IN THE VORTEX OF HUMAN WRATH (2:13)**
- ▶ **ANSWERING WITH COUNSEL AND WISDOM (2:14)**
- ▶ **INQUIRING WISELY (2:15)**
- ▶ **GIVE ME SOME TIME (2:16)**
- ▶ **KNOWING WHERE TO GO AND WHO TO TELL (2:17)**
- ▶ **THE MERCIES OF GOD, AND WHAT THEY CAN DO (2:18)**

themselves become the spoil of another heathen nation – Babylon.

While peaceful environs are to be preferred for the culturing of the soul and preparation for Divine employment, they are not the exclusive realm for training. By no means does this suggest men are to willingly seek heathen surroundings to prepare for Divine employment. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, did not choose to go to Babylon, they were carried there as captives. No man or woman of faith has ever preferred to ready themselves for the service of God in a domain that gives neither honor nor glory to Him.

The surroundings in which the four children of Judah were cultured for Divine use are not intended to be the kingdom standard. This is not the manner in which Isaiah, Jeremiah, or John the Baptist were prepared for Divine service. Nor, indeed. Did Jesus use this manner to equip His Apostles to carry the Gospel to the whole world.

WHAT IS THE POINT?

What, then, is the point of this narrative? Why has God provided such detail about these four captive children? As with *“all Scripture,”* it is in order *“that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work”*^{NASB} (2 Tim 3:17). The Lord is showing Himself to us. He is making known that faith can access Him from any place – from the Temple to the lion’s den, and from Jerusalem to the fiery furnace. **Faith is not limited by**

age or by circumstance. Allow me to briefly develop this thought. It is critical to the proper handling of Scripture. It is also essential for the encouragement of those who have put their trust in God.

God Is Greater Than Circumstance

It is possible for this point to be formally acknowledged, yet grossly neglected in practice. Our theology must find a place in our heart as well as our mind. **A heartless view of God will neither sustain the soul nor bring glory to the Subject of theology.**

One of the great contemporary weaknesses is the undue exaltation of circumstance. There are whole bodies of training and profession that are solely for the handling of circumstance. There are professionals in the handling of all manner of circumstance: emotional, domestic, financial, and matters of habit and moral enslavement. It is certainly not my purpose to speak derogatorily of those who do good in these areas. NO person who brings true advantage to men and women has done wrong.

However, earthly conditions and environments, though very real and important, are not fundamental in spiritual life. They are always subordinate. Jesus outlined the proper approach to life. *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt 6:33).

We are admonished to give *“thanks always FOR all things”* (Eph 5:20), and to give thanks *“IN everything”* (1 Thess 5:18). Additionally, it is possible to be instructed *“every where and IN all things”* (Phil 4:12). This being true, no circumstance of itself possesses the power to overcome us. It has passed through the filter of Divine purpose, and comes with any required escapes. No circumstance

has the power to shut us out from the presence of the Lord. None have the power to neutralize faith or withhold the promises of God from us. **That is why it is wrong to fasten our eyes upon difficult situations, with no regard for our access to God, His grace, and His power.** Our text confirms this is the case by relating the working of the Lord during unusually difficult times and situations.

Faith Brings Divine Instruction

Every facet of salvation is *“through faith”* (Eph 2:8). **Faith is the channel through which Divine supplies are received, and acceptable works are accomplished.** One of the remarkable supplies that come to believers is instruction, or Divine tutelage. It is when every man is *“taught by God.”* This benefit is expressed in a number of ways in Scripture. It is couched in the language of promise.

- ▶ *“I will **instruct** thee and **teach** thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will **guide** thee with mine eye”* (Psa 32:8).
- ▶ *“For his God doth **instruct** him to discretion, and doth **teach** him”* (Isa 28:26).
- ▶ *“Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will He **teach** sinners in the way. The meek will He **guide** in judgment: and the meek will He **teach** his way”* (Psa 25:8).
- ▶ *“What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall He **teach** in the way that He shall choose”* (Psa 25:12).
- ▶ *“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will **teach** us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths”* (Isa 2:3)

OUR THEOLOGY MUST FIND A PLACE IN OUR HEART AS WELL AS OUR MIND. A HEARTLESS VIEW OF GOD WILL NEITHER SUSTAIN THE SOUL NOR BRING GLORY TO THE SUBJECT OF THEOLOGY.

- ▣ “Whom shall He **teach** knowledge? and whom shall he make to **understand** doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts” (Isa 28:9).
- ▣ “And all thy children shall be **taught** of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isa 54:13).

While this is the norm in Christ Jesus, and under the New Covenant, it was not so in the time of Daniel. In this young man we will see the effectiveness of faith. In a spiritually hostile environment he will be given wisdom to assess a dangerous situation. God will teach him how to respond to a threat against his life. He will also be given the knowledge and understanding of a dream he did not have.

believer must approach God for special wisdom and protection. Because of the nature of life in “this present evil world” (Gal 14), times arise when special and singular grace is required. The life of faith does not run on automatic pilot. **That is why a religion that leaves men detached from the Lord and unaware of His presence is so lethal.** While men may imagine such a religion to be satisfactory during the normalities of life, it utterly fails them in the hour of crisis, temptation, and trial.

This is the greatest single reason for the fall of Christian people, including their leaders. They have sought to live apart from their faith, supposing that Divine benefits can be realized without the involvement of the minds, hearts, and spirits of the people.

and resolves of those who are chastened, for “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb 12:6). This is particularly true when He is chastening a body of people, like Israel in the Babylonian captivity. **In this case, Daniel was not personally being chastened, but was among a body of people that were being corrected.** He therefore relied on his personal acquaintance with the Lord, as well as his formal affiliation with Him as a seed of Abraham.

If God’s people live in a time of governmental collapse due to Divine chastening, or the correction of the church for its failure to walk in the light, they must not despair. **There are even whole segments of time in which the chastening hand of the Lord is dominate**, as in the days prophesied by Amos. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12). Even then, the Lord is still accessible to those who believe, even if they are in the minority among those who are called by His name.

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The hour of crisis and the time of trouble are not times to get faith, but occasions to use it. Those who neglect their faith, not fighting to maintain it, will fall in the time of difficulty.

The Lord Comes To His People

There is a sense in which the people of God are never without Him. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa 41:10). “I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD” (Jer 15:20). “. . . for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). **Faith depends upon the presence and support of the Lord.**

Yet, there are times when the

However, when we draw nigh to God, He WILL draw nigh to us (James 4:8). That is never more true than in the hour of trial.

Chastening Does Not Mean Abandonment

No person who is chastened by God finds the experience pleasant. Indeed, chastening is not intended to be a time of rich fellowship and joy. Thus it is written, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb 12:11). Keep in mind, Daniel was living during a time when God was chastening the nation of Israel. Yet, he did not throw up his hands in despair. **He sensed in his heart that chastening was not Divine abandonment, but holy correction.**

The Lord does not reject the cries

God Can Keep Us From Falling

The Spirit holds this truth before us: God is “is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24). This is a grand reality that is often withheld from the people of God by their teachers and leaders. Apart from the faithful ministry of my father, who has departed to be with the Lord, I recall precious few who ever spoke of this matter in the religious circles I occupied. It simply was not something people talked about. Yet, all of us need to know this. That, of course, is why it is recorded in Scripture.

Daniel was acquainted with this fact through the writings of David. “For Thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not **Thou deliver my feet from falling**, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?” (Psa 56:13). And again, “For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and **my**

feet from falling" (Psa 116:8).

Those who live in a time of chastening can still be kept from falling.

"God is able to make" those trusting in Him "to stand" (Rom 14:4). In our text, we will see HOW the Lord can do this. Daniel is in a foreign land, under a

heathen ruler, and his life is being threatened. Yet, in all of this, God will make Him stand, giving Him strong faith, wisdom, and kindred believers.

CAUGHT IN THE VORTEX OF HUMAN WRATH

"¹³ And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain." A "vortex" is a whirlpool or maelstrom that pulls things into its center. In our text, that vortex is the wrath of king Nebuchadnezzar. Because of the pretension of Babylon's wise men, and their inability to describe and interpret his dream, he has passed a sovereign edict. In his fury and anger he "commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon" (2:12).

THE DECREE WENT FORTH

"And the decree went forth . . ."

Other versions read, "So the decree was issued,"^{NIV} "So the order went out,"^{BBE} and "On publication of the decree."^{NJB} The king did not burst forth in anger, then call back his words. His counselors did not advise him to retract his words, and his mind was not changed on the matter. Rather, his command was formalized. It was made a point of immediate law, and the due authorities went to work to fulfill it completely.

You may remember the manner in which the king said the wise men would be put to death. They would be "cut in pieces," or "torn limb from limb."^{NASB} The following picture is a duplicate of one found in the Hall of Judgment in the interior of the palace at Khorsabad. It represents "the chief of the slayers" commencing the operation of flaying alive.



The text suggests that a considerable number of the wise men were actually slain.

The Aramaic version reads, "And the decree went forth, and the wise men were being slain." No

doubt the ones standing before the king when he made this decree were immediately slain. I cannot imagine Nebuchadnezzar allowing them to live when his anger and wrath erupted in this wide-sweeping edict.

Some even suggest that all of the wise men were slain. This, however, cannot be true, for some of these wise men surface

that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Pet 1:9). As the carnal mind gained dominance, the remarkable cleansing from sin was forgotten. **Holy memories cannot be maintained in a carnal mind - even if they are most unusual.** Thus, there was a time in Israel's history "when they forgot the LORD their God" (1 Sam 12:9). Even though God had dealt mightily with them,

WORLDLY PEOPLE WHO ARE EXPOSED TO DIVINE WISDOM WILL SOON FORGET IT, FOR THEY DO NOT HAVE A MIND TO RETAIN IT. THE MORE THE FLESH DOMINATES, THE MORE FORGETFUL THE INDIVIDUAL BECOMES OF DIVINE INTERVENTIONS AND EXPOSURE TO HEAVENLY WISDOM.

later in the book (4:6-7,18; 5:7-8,15). I suppose one might argue that later references were to a new generation of Babylonish wise men. However, this is not possible, since it is generally agreed that the events of chapter four occurred in the same year as those we are presently considering (around 604 B.C.).

The Carnal Mind Is Seen

We see in our text how quickly a carnal mind can forget significant revelations. **Worldly people who are exposed to Divine wisdom will soon forget it, for they do not have a mind to retain it.** The more the flesh dominates, the more forgetful the individual becomes of Divine interventions and exposure to heavenly wisdom.

This is precisely why the Spirit speaks of the person who has "forgotten

"They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt" (Psa 106:21).

Over the past fifty years, I have observed many souls in whom God has accomplished great things. These have ranged from unusual healings to spiritual insights that were not common. Some of these very people, because they became carnal in their thinking, soon began living just as though those things never occurred. Like Nebuchadnezzar, they had seen great things, yet handily forgot them when their minds were fastened to the earth.

The people of God do well to take due note of these things, and not allow them to slip from them. **We are living in spiritually impoverished times, when it is easy for church members to be more like Nebuchadnezzar than Daniel.** Uninformed men may

boast of living in times of great revelation and mighty moves of God, but the condition of the American church will not justify such a conclusion. While it is quite true that those who are close to the Lord can, indeed, experience such greatness (like Daniel in Babylon), this is not the lot of the masses.

In The Process of Being Carried Out

Our text, then, is declaring that the decree of Nebuchadnezzar was in the process of being carried out, when Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are introduced. The king's executioners are in

bloodthirstiness existed in the hearts of the executioners had now been honed to a fine edge. Perhaps they were becoming more expert in their commission as they moved along.

This was, indeed, a most difficult situation! The officials are not seeking for Daniel and his friends in order to question them, but to kill them. They are not attempting to find them so they may be given an opportunity to tell the king his dream and the interpretation of it. They fully intend to abruptly terminate their lives. The most powerful king in all the

angry king – one who rules the world. The circumstance is the decreed death of all the wise men in Babylon's empire, and Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are among that number. A considerable part of the slaughter has probably already taken place.

However, there is yet more to this situation that will serve to bring honor and glory to God. In the days of Jezebel, who, from any point of view, was far less powerful; than Nebuchadnezzar, Obadiah hid one hundred prophets in a cave so they would not be exposed to the wrath of the queen (1 Kgs 18:4). The mighty prophet Elijah himself fled from Jezebel to a place where she could not find him (1 Kgs 19:3). When Saul sought David "every day," David hid in the strongholds of the wilderness (1 Sam 23:14). When Abimelech, a son of Gideon, hired "vain and light persons," murdering seventy sons of Jerubbaal, the youngest son "hid himself," and was thus spared (Judges 9:5). On one occasion, when the people "took up stones" to cast at Jesus, He "hid Himself, slipping away from the Temple grounds" ^{NIV} (John 8:59). Moses "fled" from Egypt because of the challenge of one of his own brethren (Acts 7:29). In Iconium, when the city became divided over the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, they "fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about" (Acts 14:6). **One might suppose, therefore, that Daniel and his friends would hide themselves during the carrying out of the king's commission.** After all, there was certainly Scriptural precedence for such a response.

However, the Kingdom of God is not managed by rules and procedures. What is good under one circumstance, may not be good under another. **It may be proper to hide on one occasion, while it would wholly improper to do so on another.** The "just shall live by faith" (Heb 10:38), not by lifeless regulations. Another kind of purpose is being served in Daniel's day, and thus a different manner of response is required. **When it is proper to hide, it will require faith to do so. When it is proper to allow yourself to be found, it will also require faith.**

It is necessary to make these

THE "GOD OF GODS IS ORCHESTRATING THESE AFFAIRS TO BRING DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS INTO THE LIMELIGHT. HE IS WORKING ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR THEIR GOOD, AS WELL AS FOR HIS GLORY. THE MIGHTY GOD WILL COUCH THE EXECUTION OF HIS PURPOSE IN A SETTING DESIGNED TO GIVE HIM GLORY, AND HIS PEOPLE CONFIDENCE.

the process of removing a political and social virus from the land.

THEY SOUGHT DANIEL AND HIS FELLOWS

" . . . and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain." During the carrying out of the king's decree, a search was made for "Daniel and his fellows." Other versions read, "and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them," ^{NASB} "and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death," ^{NIV}

Note that Daniel "and his fellows" now have the reputation for being "wise men." We do not know how much time has passed since they stood before the king and were proved to be "ten times better" than all the wise men in Babylon. The consensus of historians is that the events of chapter two occurred in the same general time frame.

Not only had an urgent decree been issued by the king, there was an atmosphere of violence and hardness that had already started to develop. Whatever

world has sent them on their mission, and the government ruling the world stands behind fully them. **From any view, other than that of faith, this is a hopeless situation.**

GOD IS SETTING THE STAGE

While the Spirit supplies us with the facts in the case, strength and encouragement is not ministered to us by the facts themselves. **It is the purpose of God, that drives these circumstances, that gives them edifying power.** I do not doubt that the devil, together with his principalities and powers, have entered into this situation with a mind to eliminate Daniel and "his friends." However, he is but a temporary vassal in the hands of the Lord.

The "God of gods" (Psa 136:2) is orchestrating these affairs to bring Daniel and his friends into the limelight. He is working all things together for their good, as well as for His glory. The mighty God will couch the execution of His purpose in a setting designed to give Him glory, and His people confidence. The setting is an

observations because of the overly simplistic views that are often declared in the name of the Lord. One must remember that adhering to mere rules does not require faith. That was solidly

confirmed in the Law, which was the highest form of law. *“The Law is NOT,”* we are reminded, *“of faith”* (Gal 3:12).

We will now behold how faith can

respond to a threat, and how the Lord will carry out His purpose. You will find it is on an extremely personal level, and with a keen interest to making God’s mind known.

ANSWERING WITH COUNSEL AND WISDOM

“¹⁴ Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king’s guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon.” We are not told how long the executioners searched for Daniel. It may not have been long, for there is no evidence that Daniel and his friends were hiding themselves. The point of the text is not that a search was made for Daniel, but how this man of faith would respond when he was found. The God who orchestrated these circumstances will equip His servants to respond properly to them. Like David, their times were in the hand of God, not Nebuchadnezzar (Psa 31:15).

ANSWERING WITH COUNSEL AND WISDOM

“Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom . . .” Other versions read *“with discretion and discernment,”* NASB *“wisdom and tact,”* NIV *“prudence and discretion,”* NRSV *“wisdom and good sense,”* BBE and *“with shrewd and cautious words.”* NJB

Even though Daniel was facing a man who had come to take his life, he still maintained composure of both spirit and mind. **Danger can cause good sense and wisdom to run from the fearful.** But this is not the case with Daniel. This reveals a valuable aspect of faith. It settles the heart and mind, enabling the believer to face a crisis without falling apart or speaking rashly. This is because faith knows WHO is really in control of the circumstances. One cannot shake before men while trusting in *“the Mighty God”* (Jer 32:18). In Daniel we are NOT beholding a national hero, but a man who believes and trusts in the Living God.

Answering

What was it that Daniel was *“answering?”* Perhaps the executioner

had asked if he was, indeed, Daniel. He might also have given a brief summation of the edict under which he was operating. At any rate, there was some form of Babylonian protocol that was intended to precede the execution. From a higher vantage point, however, this was a small door of opportunity through which faith could enter, and Daniel seized upon the moment.

We learn from this that there are levels in circumstance. What appears to be only danger can actually contain an opportunity. Scripture puts it this way: *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”* (1

▣ **COMMON.** This circumstance was not unique to Daniel and his friends. It had fallen upon all of the wise men of Babylon.

▣ **GOD IS FAITHFUL.** The king who had been impressed with the wisdom and understanding of Daniel and his colleagues was not faithful. Now, he had issued an edict against them, instead of for them. Yet, because God was *“faithful,”* Daniel could stand.

▣ **NOT SUFFER.** Whether before the Old Covenant, during it, or in the New Covenant, God has always operated in this manner: He has not permitted trials to exceed the ability of His people. I do not know that Daniel was as conversant with this

TRIALS PASS THROUGH THE DIVINE COURT BEFORE THEY ENTER THE ARENA OF FLESH AND BLOOD. WHEN THEY ARRIVE AT THE DOOR OF THE BELIEVER, THEY COME WITH A BUILT-IN ESCAPE HATCH. IT IS ONE THAT FAITH CAN DETECT, IF NOT PRECISELY, YET IN PRINCIPLE. FAITH DOES NOT LOOK AT THE TEMPTATION, BUT LOOKS FOR THE “WAY TO ESCAPE.”

Cor 10:13). Allow me to review this text with God’s promise in mind.

▣ **TAKEN YOU.** Here is a temptation, or trial, that has taken hold of Daniel. From all appearance, it looks as though he is inferior to it, and is nothing but a victim in its grasp.

truth as those who are in Christ Jesus. However, his heart was embracing the truth, even though its fullness may not have been grasped by him. This is something that faith knows, even if the mind is not fully aware of it. It is possible to live with the perspective of faith.

▣ **MAKE A WAY.** Trials pass through the Divine court before they enter the arena of flesh and blood. When they arrive at the door of the believer, they come with a built-in escape hatch. It is one that faith can detect, if not precisely, yet in principle. Faith does not look at the temptation, but looks for the “*way to escape.*”

WISDOM AND COUNSEL

Daniel’s words are calculated to delay the execution. They must not be hasty words, for “*he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly*” (Prov 14:29). Solomon once said of a man prone to speak superficially, “*Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him*” (Prov 29:20). **Daniel does not speak to vent fear, but to express faith.** His words must be carefully chosen so they will not stir up the flesh, or provoke anger in the executioner standing before him.

members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell” (James 3:6). **Wise and prudent words avoid starting that flaming fire of iniquity.** Who is able to measure the heartache, friction, danger, and destruction that have been stimulated, and even fostered, by words?

Daniel now speaks to the circumstance like Jesus spoke to the waters and storm (Mark 4:39). He will still a social tempest with his words.

The Truth Is Being Lived Out

In our text, this very truth is being lived out before us. In Daniel’s case, “*the way to escape*” was entered by speaking. **His life would depend upon his words.** If his words are too bulky, and lack substance, he will not be able to get through the “*way to escape.*” If they are too lean and foolish, they will tend to close the door. His reply must be appropriate!

swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?” Joab replied he was not simply swallowing up cities. There was a man named Sheba, who had lifted up his hand against king David. He told the woman if she would deliver this man to him, the city would receive no harm. The woman agreed to cast his head over the wall. In her wisdom, she told the citizens of that city what was required to spare the city. As a result, “*they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent*” (2 Sam 20:15-22). The deliverance all began with a wise and discreet word.

As Solomon Affirmed

Solomon also spoke of a city being delivered by the words of a poor man who was wise. “*This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man*” (Eccl 9:13-16).

ARIOCH

“*Arioch the captain of the king’s guard . . .*” This man was not an emissary of the king, or an envoy of good will. He was “*the captain of the king’s guard,*” and was come to carry out the orders of the king. He is “*the king’s chief executioner,*”^{NSRV} As such, he is certainly not noted for sympathy. Nor, indeed, is he noted for reasoning about the circumstances. **He was not sent to talk to the wise men of Babylon, but to kill them.** He did not come to discuss the edict of the king, but to carry it out.

But there is more to this circumstance than Nebuchadnezzar and Arioch. God is working in this context, and it is His will that is really being carried out. The heart of Nebuchadnezzar “*is in the hand of the Lord,*” and He will turn it “*wherever He wishes*”^{NKJV} (Prov 21:1). The heart of Arioch is no different! He also is subject to the King of kings.

If God controls the heart of the king, He certainly will have no trouble with the hearts of those who work for him!

WISE AND PRUDENT WORDS ARE SPOKEN WITH A MIND TO THE EFFECT THEY WILL HAVE. SOME PEOPLE SPEAK ONLY TO MAKE KNOWN THEIR PERSONAL PREFERENCES. SUCH WORDS ARE NOT ALWAYS CHARACTERIZED BY DISCRETION, FOR SELF INTERESTS ARE NOT A SUITABLE CONTAINER FOR DISCERNING SPEECH.

Wise and prudent words are spoken with a mind to the effect they will have. Some people speak only to make known their personal preferences. Such words are not always characterized by discretion, for **self interests are not a suitable container for discerning speech.**

A faithful and wise heart surveys the land, as it were, and speaks in a manner that will not stir up the enemy, or arouse the wild beasts in the land. It is ever true that the tongue can be used to release wrath as well as to calm the waters. As James said, “*And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our*

Therefore Daniel answers with “*counsel,*” or prudence and discretion. His words are characterized by “*wisdom,*” or godly tact and taste.

The Wise Woman of the City of Abel

Daniel conducted himself like the “*wise woman out of the city*” that was being besieged by Joab. As the men with Joab were battering down the wall of that city, this woman cried out, asking Joab to come close so she could speak to him. She told him that it was a long standing practice to ask counsel before wreaking devastation in any city. She said she herself was peaceable, and was “*a mother in Israel.*” “*Why,*” she asked, “*wilt thou*

INQUIRING WISELY

“¹⁶ He answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.” Being under the control of the mighty God, Arioch tells Daniel something of the decree under which he is operating. We know from the words that follow that his explanation was brief, for he had no mind to go into the details of his commission. However, he does **not** shout back, “Who are you to question me? If you are Daniel, you are one of the wise men, and you must die!”

HE ANSWERED

“*He answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain . . .*” This is the second time Daniel has spoken – and we are yet at the beginning of the whole episode. Already the wrath of the executioner has subsided, and he is engaged in a conversation with one of the men he has been ordered to kill. **This is nothing less than the hand of the Lord!** The Lord has joined himself, as it were, to Daniel, and is directing this whole affair through his faithful servant. It is actually Daniel who is in charge, not Arioch.

WHY?

“ . . . *Why is the decree so hasty from the king?*” Daniel continues to speak with wisdom and discretion. He does not use the temporary cessation of Arioch’s mission as a license for folly. **His answer suggests the king is not noted for being hasty, ill-tempered, or acting without due reason.** Thus, in his answer, Daniel has not drawn attention to himself, but to the nobility of the ruler under which Arioch operates. In his answer Daniel has not lied. He has not exaggerated the facts. Nor, indeed, has he resorted to superficial reasoning. **In his answer, he has allowed for a further response from the king’s captain.**

The Superiority of Faith

We ought to note the background of this occasion. Suddenly, and without apparent warning, Daniel and his friends are about to be killed. This is an occasion when fear could rise up and dominate the heart – yet it does not. **Faith can not only survive sudden and unexpected tests, it can triumph over them.**

Not only must Daniel be able to speak wisely, the peace of God must rule his heart. Doubt and fear must be expelled from his heart. Strength must be ministered to his heart and mind. He must be able to think soundly, speak properly, and maintain an unruffled appearance. Arioch must not be aroused to further anger by the demeanor, words, or appearance of Daniel. That certainly is a big order, but faith is fully equal to the challenge. We will see that faith does, in fact, “*overcome the world*” (1 John 5:4-5). It will be confirmed to our hearts by demonstration as well as affirmation.

Something to be Seen

In this, a valuable insight may be obtained. At this point, God has not revealed all of the circumstances to

born a child according to his prophesy (2 Kgs 4:16-17). The promised son had died in the arms of his mother shortly before. This is the woman who had prepared a special lodging for the prophet. When her son died, she took him up to that room, and laid him on the bed she had made for Elisha. She then set out to find the prophet. It is written that she “*saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, ‘Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you’*”^{NKJV} (2 Kgs 4:24).

As she drew near to Mount Carmel, Elisha saw her afar off, recognizing who it was. He told his servant Gehazi, “*Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?*” The woman whose son

BECAUSE OF THE SPIRITUAL DEGENERATION OF OUR TIMES, THERE ARE ALL MANNER OF SUPERFLUOUS REASONING FOUND WITHIN THE PROFESSED CHURCH. SOME THINK IF A MATTER IS NOT REVEALED BY GOD DIRECTLY TO THE INDIVIDUAL, IT IS NOT INTENDED TO BE KNOWN. WE HAVE BOTH ELISHA AND DANIEL WHO WILL REFUTE SUCH REASONING.

Daniel. He has been given wisdom and discretion, but not full insight into the circumstance. He does not, however, fold his hands and assume it is not for him to know such things. This is not the way in which faith operates. He will inquire further, trusting that through such means God will open this up to him.

Faith is not humiliated because it has to ask questions. It is not demeaned by obtaining further information from others. Take, for example, the case of the mighty prophet Elisha. He received a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, which itself was considerably greater than the portion given to others. On one occasion, Elisha confronted a Shunammite woman who had

had actually died replied, “*It is well.*”

After dismounting, the woman ran and took hold of the feet of the prophet. Thinking her conduct was unbecoming, Gehazi stepped forward to “*push her away.*” It was then that Elisha replied, “*Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me*” (2 Kgs 4:27). However, the prophet did not conclude the Lord did not intend for him to know the situation of the woman. Instead, he listened to her explanation (verses 28-31). He had to learn about the situation from her, even though God would empower him to correct it.

A Valuable Lesson

The Sharp Contrast Between the Response of the Flesh and that of Faith Is Lived Out, by Given O. Blakely

Because of the spiritual degeneration of our times, there are all manner of superfluous reasoning found within the professed church. Some think if a matter is not revealed by God directly to the individual, it is not intended to be known. We have both Elisha and Daniel who will refute such reasoning. Others conclude it is never right to receive required information from others. They imagine God only deals directly with the heart, and never through one mortal communicating with another. Both Elisha and Daniel confirm this is not always the case. Elisha had to learn about the woman's situation from her. Daniel had to learn about the king's edict from Arioch.

The fact that we may receive our information from one of our peers, our family, a fellow believer,

a doctor, or some other individual, does not mean God will not work in our behalf. It may appear more humbling to have to receive the information from Arioch – especially when you are a person who has been given wisdom, knowledge, and understanding from the God of heaven. However, if that is the case, listen to what Arioch says, and rely upon the Lord to take it from there.

ARIOCH MAKES THE THING KNOWN

“Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.” This is a most marvelous thing! This is a Babylonian speaking with a Jew, whose nation had been conquered by his own. It is an executioner, certainly not noted for holding quiet dialog with those he had been sent to put to death. He is also on a mission from the king, which surely did not allow for such delays.

Further, he is certainly under no obligation to provide lengthy explanations about his mission.

In his response, the Lord is using Arioch to enlarge the understanding of Daniel. He is also providing some time in which he can speak to Daniel, and direct him in a *“plain path”* (Psa 27:11). The steps of Daniel are being directed by God.

Speaking as a man, Arioch no doubt knew the king wanted to know his dream and what it meant. Perhaps the Lord used Daniel to awaken that knowledge within him, thereby constraining him to be considerate of Daniel, and not to simply snuff out his life. All of this, and more, is involved in the Lord working all things together for the good of the four children of Judah.

GIVE ME SOME TIME

“¹⁶ Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation.” Once again, the Holy Spirit leaps from pinnacle to pinnacle, showing us the working of the Lord. We are suddenly transported from where Daniel was

DANIEL WENT IN

“Then Daniel went in” Knowing the fierce anger of the king at the time of the edict (2:12), it is remarkable that Arioch allowed Daniel to come before Nebuchadnezzar. People did not simply stroll into the court of the kings in those days. You may remember

king under the umbrella of free speech and inalienable rights! From an earthly perspective, he could very well lose his life. However, that is not the perspective that faith embraces.

Daniel enters the presence of the king more mindful of King of kings than the king of Babylon. He knows the rule of heaven is superior to the governments of this world. He therefore enters confidently into the presence of the inferior ruler of an inferior kingdom. That is the perspective of faith.

It is a principle of sound thought that the circumstances that prevail over the superior also hold true with the inferior. If Daniel can trust God in the presence of earth's greatest king, and within the world's greatest government, can you not trust the Lord in your circumstances?

IT IS A PRINCIPLE OF SOUND THOUGHT THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT PREVAIL OVER THE SUPERIOR ALSO HOLD TRUE WITH THE INFERIOR. IF DANIEL CAN TRUST GOD IN THE PRESENCE OF EARTH'S GREATEST KING, AND WITHIN THE WORLD'S GREATEST GOVERNMENT, CAN YOU NOT TRUST THE LORD IN YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES?

residing to the court of the king. We learn from this that Daniel's words were received by Arioch. **Again, God is working everything together for the good of Daniel.** He is leading the man of God step by step, for that is precisely how faith operates.

how cautious Esther was about appearing before the king – and he was her husband, and was not in a state of anger (Esth 4:10-11). Nehemiah was also cautious before the king (Neh 2:1-4).

Daniel did not enter before the

DESIRED OF THE KING

“ . . . and desired of the king” Other versions read, *“and asked the king,”* ^{NKJV} *“and requested of the king,”* ^{NASB} and *“and besought the king.”* ^{NRSV} Daniel was not presumptuous before the king, nor did he come in the confidence of the flesh. **The boldness of faith is not**

the same as the brashness of the flesh. Confidence in God does not equate to carnal arrogance. Faith will give honor to whom honor is due (Rom 13:7), and does not take privilege for granted.

Daniel does not say to the king, "See here, you had no right to decree my death without even giving me an opportunity to fulfill your demands!" He does not come in the name of personal rights, but humbly bows to the authority of the king, asking for an opportunity, not his "rights."

We ought not to despise the political and social rights that have been vouchsafed to us. They are not usual, and therefore ought not to be taken for granted. However, neither must we allow them to make us demanding and inconsiderate. **When the Lord grants us uncommon privileges, we are not to use them as an occasion to be insolent, complaining, or seeking our own ways.** There is a certain amount of social unrest that has arisen in our country because the national privileges have been viewed with greater respect than the favor of God Almighty. It is unfortunate that this tendency has even crept into the church. There are far too many people who fall apart if they do not get their own way. In such an atmosphere faith does not function, and flesh is given the ascendancy..

GIVE HIM TIME

"... that he would give him time . . ." Daniel asks the king "for time." ^{NIV} In so doing, from an earthly point of view, he is actually testing the patience of the king. The wise men who occasioned the edict being carried out by Arioch had, in a sense, asked for time also. They twice asked Nebuchadnezzar to tell them his dream (2:4,7). The king charged them with "trying to gain time" (2:8), and charged them with speaking "lying and corrupt words" (2:9). From the low perspective, Daniel has no reason to believe he will be treated with any more consideration.

Daniel, however, is not thinking of how the king has treated others. He is pondering presenting the cause to the Lord, and obtaining wisdom from Him with whom he really has to do. **When**

flesh asks for time, it is wrong! When faith asks for it, it is right! Blessed is the person who can distinguish between the two.

Note that Daniel asked for himself to be given time, not all four ("Daniel and his fellows"). While all four of the young men had been given "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom," it was Daniel who "had understanding in all visions and

"saved" are actually living at a distance from the Lord. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus permits them to come with boldness into His presence, yet they dwell in the outer court. Whatever explanations may be offered for this situation, they are totally unacceptable.

The atmosphere of convenience that is dominating the religious scene is not good. With an

IT IS STILL TRUE THAT EACH PERSON OPERATES WITHIN CERTAIN DIVINELY APPOINTED BOUNDARIES. GOD HAS NOT CALLED ALL MEN TO DO THE SAME THING, AND EVERYONE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST DOES NOT HAVE AN IDENTICAL MINISTRY.

dreams" (1:17). He would consort with the others, but in the end, he knew HE was the one who would have to give the answer the king demanded.

It is still true that each person operates within certain Divinely appointed boundaries. God has not called all men to do the same thing, and everyone in the body of Christ does not have an identical ministry. As it is written, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor 12:17-18). There are certain ministries that are to be carried out by certain people – like Daniel interpreting the king's dream, or Paul being the Apostle to the Gentiles. Other brethren may assist them in this ministry, but in the end, they themselves must carry it out. That fact is inherent in this text.

Something to Note

Because of the spiritually impoverished condition of the Western church, it is necessary to explain certain matters. **Much of the lack of wisdom and discretion that exist in our time is directly owing to aloofness from God.** Even though salvation brings God and men together, many who claim to be

abundance of counselors, brief exposure to the things of God, and the deluge of distractions, people are being subtly encouraged to address their problems in indirect ways. If they are unable to hand the matter over to a professional to solve for them, they can always resort to some form of distraction or entertainment to push their problems into the background. The *Christian* climate of our day does not lead people to sense their need of, and access to, the Living God. Those, however, who are in a condition like Daniel, cannot afford to think in this manner.

There is nothing about salvation that suggests or condones walking in darkness, or apart from the fellowship of the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3; 1 Cor 1:9). Rather, everything about salvation provides for closeness to God. Ponder what the Spirit has said on this matter.

▣ "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:2).

▣ "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph 2:18).

▣ "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of

[in] him” (Eph 3:12).

- ▶ “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Heb 7:19).
- ▶ “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8).
- ▶ “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).
- ▶ “And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22).

We do well to remember “God was

Scriptures, a lack of hunger and thirst for righteousness, and a feeling of at-homeness in the world. As if these conditions were not themselves enough, they are greatly compounded. **They are the direct result of the teaching and emphasis of the modern church.** Churches are what their doctrines and teachers have made them.

Good trees do NOT produce evil fruit. **Wherever defective religion is found, we have a bad tree on our hands.** Jesus put it this way. **“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit”** ^{NIV} (Matt 12:33).

The Point

The point is that Daniel was yielding good fruit on a good tree. **He had been living by faith, and now his**

work because there is no working principle in it. Those who say you can have faith and not have works have contradicted James. His point is that such a thing is not possible. You might as well refer to a corpse as a person as to call something that does not work “*faith*.”

Because of this circumstance, it is not a theological position that sustains us, but our faith. Being persuaded of the right things is important. Believing and trusting in God is absolutely essential. Those who trust in God take matters of concern to Him. Those who do not trust in Him rely upon their own wisdom and that of other men. Our text shows how faith operates, and those in whose company faith best functions.

Those realities, and more, are being lived out in our text. That is why it ministers to us.

HE WILL SHOW THE KING

“... and that **he** would show the king the interpretation.” Other versions read, “in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.” ^{NASB} “so that he might interpret the dream for him,” ^{NIV} and “and he would tell the king the interpretation.” ^{NRSV} Although the text does not say so, Nebuchadnezzar must have recalled Daniel when he came before him. There was nothing in Daniel’s past that would infuriate the king. **His righteous life would now lend itself to the favor of the king.** We will find that the king will not treat Daniel as an enemy or an imposter. There are at least two reasons for this. First, Daniel had given the king no cause to think he was either. Second, the Lord was in the matter, softening the heart of the king, and making provision for the announcement of a heavenly purpose.

There are two things to be seen in this case. There is an element of certainty associated with both of them. That, of course, is as it should be, for “*faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*” ^{NIV} (Heb 11:1).

First, Time to Know

Daniel was not stalling for time like the wise men before him. He was anticipating meeting with the Lord on the matter. The wise men of Babylon asked for Nebuchadnezzar to help them. Daniel

WE ARE NOT PROTECTED BY AN IMPERSONAL STATUS, BUT BY OUR IDENTITY WITH THE LORD. THAT IDENTITY IS INITIATED AND MAINTAINED BY FAITH, AND FAITH CANNOT BE INACTIVE! WHEN JAMES REFERRED TO “FAITH” BEING “DEAD,” HE WAS NOT SUGGESTING THAT A VALID FAITH CAN LACK LIFE AND VITALITY. RATHER, WHEN HE SAID, “FAITH, IF IT HATH NOT WORKS, IS DEAD, BEING ALONE” (JAMES 2:17), HE WAS SAYING SUCH WAS NOT FAITH AT ALL, BUT WAS SPURIOUS, AND AN IMAGINATION.

in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor 5:19). Although sin had put us far off from God, now we are “made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13). If Daniel had recourse to the living God under the Old Covenant, how much more do those in Chris have access to Him under the new and “better covenant” (Heb 8:6).

Distant discipleship is no discipleship at all! **Those who dwell at a distance from God, by that very posture, forfeit the benefits that come when men are close to Him.**

In our time, aloofness from God is evidenced by an ignorance of the

faith was carrying him through a crisis. Had he been living at a distance from the Lord, he would have perished with the rest of the wise men.

We are not protected by an impersonal status, but by our identity with the Lord. That identity is initiated and maintained by faith, and **faith cannot be inactive!** When James referred to “*faith*” being “*dead*,” he was not suggesting that a valid faith can lack life and vitality. Rather, when he said, “*faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*” (James 2:17), he was saying such was not faith at all, but was spurious, and an imagination. Such pretentious faith is like a body without a spirit. It cannot

would ask his God for the answer. He wanted time with the Lord, not merely time to think. At this point, thinking would do not good apart from the Lord, for the dream itself was not known, much less the interpretation. This was a time to trust and inquire of the Lord. God had given him knowledge, but NOT all knowledge. He had been granted wisdom, but NOT all wisdom. He could interpret all manner of dreams and visions, but not on his own.

Second, An Answer Would Be Given

The wise men of the empire said they would give an interpretation if only the king would tell them what he dreamed. Daniel asked nothing from the king but a little time, guaranteeing “*he would tell the king the interpretation.*”^{NRSV} He did **not** say he might be able to obtain “*the interpretation,*” for that

would have offered no consolation to the king. Faith enabled Daniel to be certain he would, in fact, receive what the king required.

ONE FURTHER OBSERVATION

An additional observation should be made. Note the apparent confidence with which Daniel made his request. He guarantees that a little time will yield the precise thing the king desires: “*in order that he might **declare** the interpretation.*”^{NASB} He does not say that an interpretation could possibly be forthcoming, but that “*he **would** tell the king the interpretation.*”^{NRSV} This is the reasoning of faith. **The believer knows that required things will be obtained when they are sought from God by faith.**

Confidence and assurance are inherent in faith itself. For that reason it is written, “*Now faith is **being sure** of what we hope for and **certain** of what we do not see*”^{NIV} (Heb 11:1). Therefore, the words Daniel spoke were not the expression of a timorous and doubtful soul. He was persuaded that time spent with the God whom He consistently served would yield the required results.

I cannot overemphasize this marvelous benefit of living by faith. **When we do not quench and grieve the Spirit of God, we will not be disappointed when we throw ourselves upon the Lord.** If we sow to the Spirit, the Spirit will bring a rich harvest to us. That is a guarantee (Gal 6:8). It is not possible to sow to the Spirit and reap a disappointing harvest!

KNOWING WHERE TO GO AND WHO TO TELL

“*17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions.*” Part of being wise and understanding is knowing what to do with time when you receive it. Some people have sufficient time to obtain what they require, yet do nothing with it. They squander time like the prodigal wasted his inheritance. Such people should not be surprised when they remain in spiritual poverty. The things of God can be received instantly, but not apart from the expectation of faith. **Answers from heaven do not suddenly descend upon those who walk in the flesh, seeking their own interests above those of their Lord.** Although this may seem quite apparent, it is not common knowledge among *church members*. All manner of professed believers are in a state of consternation because their prayers are apparently unanswered, their circumstances unchanged, and their lives in a state of misery.

Much of this is because they have elected to live at a distance from the Lord. Their Bibles remain closed, they avoid fellowship with godly people, and their affections remain nailed to the earth.

What compounds the matter is that contemporary Christianity actually encourages such a posture of life. With its brief and infrequent meetings, frothy praise, and juvenile instruction, it has actually set people up to fall.

I certainly do not mean to harp on such matters, for that is neither wise nor profitable. However, the spiritual climate in which we are living does not encourage

is the consequence of his trust in, and familiarity with, the Living God.

WENT TO HIS HOUSE

Again, only the high points of this account are emphasized. Arioch found Daniel at his house, brought him to the king, and now he is returning to his house. **That means the king has consented to his request. He has given him the time he desired.**

FAITH MOVES US TO RELY UPON GOD — CONSCIOUSLY AND CONSISTENTLY. THE DELIVERANCE OF DANIEL IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF HIS TRUST IN, AND FAMILIARITY WITH, THE LIVING GOD.

such conclusions. That is another reason why the text before us is so important. It is unveiling the manner in which those who trust in God live. **Faith moves us to rely upon God – consciously and consistently.** The deliverance of Daniel

In this we again see the marvelous working of the Lord. The king was previously furious, issuing an order to kill all of the wise men in the empire. Now, his heart is softened, and he grants Daniel’s request for a little space. God has

turned Nebuchadnezzar's heart, moving things into Daniel's favor! The stage is being set for God to unveil the superiority of His Kingdom, and the ultimate demise of all earthly kingdoms. In His maneuvering, he has displayed the impotence of worldly wisdom, and removed all competitors from the stage upon which these things will be revealed.

The text suggests this was not a lengthy period of time, but probably a single day. The secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision – I assume it was the same night. Daniel will thus appear before the king the very next day.

Daniel returns to his own house to

(1 Sam 17:23-51), Elijah against the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:21-40), and John the Baptist in his introductory ministry (Matt 3:1-6). But these were most extraordinary men and occasions.

David Speaks

David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14), spoke of the value of spiritual companionship. When speaking of going up to the house of the Lord he said, "I was glad when they said unto me, *Let us go into the house of the LORD*" (Psa 122:1). Of such companionship he also said, "We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company" (Psa 55:14). When Joseph and Mary made the round-trip to

members every one of them **in the body**, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but **one body**" (1 Cor 12:18-20). The unity of those in Christ Jesus is so profound that individual believers are said to be "members of one another"^{NKJV} (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25).

The Point

Thus, when Daniel goes to his house and reveals the situation to "his fellows," he is acting in perfect harmony with the manner of the Kingdom of God. This is simply how faith operates, working in harmony with the faith of others.

We must learn from this incident that there is no need to shoulder all our burdens alone. It is true that certain matters must be handled solely by the individual. As it is written, "For every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal 6:5). However, all things do not fall into that category, and we do well to seek wisdom to be discerning about our circumstances.

The Thing Is Made Known

"... and made the thing known." Other versions read, "and made the decision known,"^{NKJV} "and informed his friends,"^{NASB} "and explained the matter."^{NIV}

This whole incident began when Arioch found "Daniel and his friends." Although the text does not say all four were present when Daniel first spoke, it is assumed that they were. Nothing in the text suggests that Daniel was by himself when he presented his plea. He alone went to the king, for it was he alone that would provide the information the king demanded.

Daniel not only had received the "understanding in all visions and dreams," he knew he had been so blessed. **A spiritual gift, or aptitude, is of little value if the one possessing it is ignorant of its presence.**

The Propensity to Mystery

There is in the natural man a certain propensity to mystery. Men are often fond of ascribing to God things they do not understand, as though it was the preference of the Almighty to work in obscurity toward those who trust in Him. It is certainly true that "It is the glory of

DANIEL NOT ONLY HAD RECEIVED THE "UNDERSTANDING IN ALL VISIONS AND DREAMS," HE KNEW HE HAD BEEN SO BLESSED. A SPIRITUAL GIFT, OR APTITUDE, IS OF LITTLE VALUE IF THE ONE POSSESSING IT IS IGNORANT OF ITS PRESENCE.

make his plea to the Lord. While it is true that God can be accessed from any place, it is also true that **special places are often required for special graces**. The Lord Jesus "ofttimes resorted" to the garden of Gethsemane for prayer (John 18:1). Other times, when pressed by the crowds, he would depart to a mountain "to pray" (Mark 6:46; John 6:15). Daniel went to his house, a place that was more conducive to supplication than the king's court. **I do not doubt that many dear souls fail to obtain answers to critical prayers because they have not, so to speak, entered into their closet.**

MADE THE THING KNOWN

"... and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions." It is written, "God sets the solitary in families"^{NKJV} (Psa 68:6). **Few laborers are called to work alone.** That is not the ordinary way in which the Lord is served. There have been occasions when men have been noted for standing alone. They include David against Goliath

Jerusalem to observe the Passover, they fulfilled this Psalm by traveling "in company" with kindred spirits. On the way home, when missing Jesus, "they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance" (Luke 2:44).

Holy Groups

God has frequently put men together for the accomplishment of His work. Holy couplets include Moses and Aaron (Ex 4:29; 5:1; 6:27), Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:6-38), David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:1; 19:2,7; 2 Sam 21:7), Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2,7), and Paul and Silas (Acts 16:19,25,29; 17:4,10). There were also "Peter, James, and John" (Matt 17:1; 26:37).

The Body of Christ

The ultimate fulfillment of sacred grouping is the body of Christ. There comradery reaches its spiritual zenith. It is written, "But now hath God set the

God to conceal a thing” (Prov 25:2), but not from those who trust in Him. God is honored when His matters are hidden from the “wise and the prudent.” But He is glorified when those very things are “revealed unto babes,” or those who are willing to trust in Him (Matt 11:25; Lk 10:21).

In His dealings with those who believe, God is known more for revealing than concealing, and for making known than for hiding. It was for this reason that David often prayed for understanding: i.e., for God to make known to him secrets that could not otherwise be comprehended (Psa 119:23, 73,125,144,169). Thus we read the following.

▫ “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God **revealed** from faith to faith: as it is written, *The just shall live by faith*” (Rom 1:17).

▫ “But as it is written, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath **revealed** them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*” (1 Cor 2:9-10).

▫ “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now **revealed** unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph 3:4-5).

▫ “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is **made manifest**, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (Rom 16:25-26).

▫ “Wherein he hath abounded toward

us in all wisdom and prudence; Having **made known** unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself” (Eph 1:8-9).

▫ “But now the righteousness of God without the law is **manifested**, being witnessed by the law and the prophets” (Rom 3:21).

▫ “But hath in due times **manifested** his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior” (Tit 1:3).

Although these things are not

approach the Lord as though the matter was not critical. Thus, Daniel revealed the particulars required for a proper quest for understanding.

THE HINDERING EFFECTS OF GENERALITIES

Although this subject must be approached with both caution and wisdom, there are times when being too general becomes a hindrance to the saints. It is not that we are to develop a penchant for all of the gory details. However, neither are we to content ourselves to pray within the fog of ignorance. There are issues so crucial that some details are necessary if we are to pray properly. We must not confine ourselves to generalities.

IN HIS DEALINGS WITH THOSE WHO BELIEVE, GOD IS KNOWN MORE FOR REVEALING THAN CONCEALING, AND FOR MAKING KNOWN THAN FOR HIDING. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT DAVID OFTEN PRAYED FOR UNDERSTANDING: I.E., FOR GOD TO MAKE KNOWN TO HIM SECRETS THAT COULD NOT OTHERWISE BE COMPREHENDED

commonly known among professed believers in Christ, they were sensed by Daniel. He knew God as a Revealer, and thus took matters he could not understand to Him. He did not run to the Babylonian library, or begin searching through their literature on the interpretation of dreams. Even though he had not personally had the dream, and had no idea what the dream was, yet he did know where to inquire. He was not willing to let the matter remain a secret, particularly since the lives of he and his fellows depended upon him providing a satisfactory and true answer to the kmg.

“The Thing”

Daniel made known “the thing,” or “decision” ^{NKJV} of Nebuchadnezzar. That is, he let them know the king had allotted a brief time for Daniel to obtain the needed understanding. If they were going to travail in prayer with him, they needed to know some of the particulars. They certainly could not seek the face of the Lord as though they had a lot of time. Neither, indeed, could they casually

Two examples will suffice to confirm this.

▫ “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; **That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted** of the saints; **That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed**” (Rom 15:30-32).

▫ “Finally, brethren, pray for us, **that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith**” (2 Thess 3:1-2).

When Daniel and his friends besought the Lord, they would not be general in their petition. They had a

purpose for praying, and it was not simply to fulfill a mere formality. **In a sense, their lives depended on their prayers!**

HIS COMPANIONS

And to whom did Daniel make these things known? He certainly did not talk things over with some Babylonians. This was something that was too demanding for members of a heathen empire. The man of God makes this matter known to *“Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions.”*

These were the people with whom he chose to spend quality time. They were brethren of faith, and were also

Some people, even though they choose to be called *“Christian,”* speak more with the unregenerate about their troubles than with those who are reconciled to God. Almost without exception, such people are found in constant trouble and frustration. Because they have surrounded themselves with unbelievers, they themselves have a great tendency to unbelief.

The Love of the Brethren

Considerable is said about the love believers have for one another. Jesus not only commanded this love, but said it was a *“new commandment.”* It is not *“new”* in the sense of being a new requirement. It is the **manner** of the love that makes it

*obeying the truth through the Spirit unto **unfeigned love** of the brethren, see that ye love one another **with a pure heart fervently**”* (1 Pet 1:22).

- ▣ *“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another**”* (1 John 3:11).
- ▣ *“We know that we have **passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death**”* (1 John 3:14).
- ▣ *“Whosoever hateth his brother **is a murderer**: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him”* (1 John 3:15).
- ▣ *“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That **he who loveth God love his brother also**”* (1 John 4:20-21).
- ▣ *“He that loveth his brother **abideth in the light**, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him”* (1 John 2:10).
- ▣ *“Beloved, let us love one another: for **love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love**”* (1 John 4:7-8).

The strength of these statements is apparent. **There is absolutely no room for neglecting to love the people of God.** A failure to do so evidences the heart of a murderer, and reveals the person does not know God or walk in the light, regardless of their profession.

What Is the Relevance

It may appear that all of this is nothing more than a diversion from our text. However, this confirms WHY Daniel shared this matter with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were not merely *“his companions”* in profession, but even more so in the faith. It was their *“mutual faith”* that bound them together,

AND TO WHOM DID DANIEL MAKE THESE THINGS KNOWN? HE CERTAINLY DID NOT TALK THINGS OVER WITH SOME BABYLONIANS. THIS WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS TOO DEMANDING FOR MEMBERS OF A HEATHEN EMPIRE. THE MAN OF GOD MAKES THIS MATTER KNOWN TO “HANANIAH, MISHAEL, AND AZARIAH, HIS COMPANIONS.”

committed to the Lord. They were also young men to whom the Lord had given *“knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom”* (1:17). They were not simply his companions in Babylon, but kindred spirits in the faith. They also perceived the gravity of the situation, and knew what should be done.

The Advantage of Kindred Spirits

We cannot overstate the value of kindred spirits – those of *“like precious faith”* (2 Pet 1:1). **These are people to whom faith has joined us, and among whom God has placed us.** They are individuals of whom it is said, *“God is not ashamed to be called their God”* (Heb 11:16). It is also said of Jesus, *“He is not ashamed to call them brethren”* (Heb 2:11). When we choose to company with such people, they will be able to more fully assist us in the hour of need. Among men, these are the ones who know and appreciate us best. They are the ones who can most precisely identify the real need. They also are the ones who know how to best respond to it.

new. *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; **as I have loved you**, that ye also love one another”* (John 13:34). That makes this love profound as well as affectionate, and effective as well as tender. Much is said about this love, and it serves to shed further light on why Daniel made this matter known to three particular individuals, not the everyone in general.

- ▣ *“**By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another**”* (John 13:35).
- ▣ *“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, **as I have loved you**”* (John 15:12). *“These things I command you, that ye love one another”* (John 15:17).
- ▣ *“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are **taught of God to love one another**”* (1 Thess 4:9).
- ▣ *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in*

moving them to join in a common cause. **The fact that this could occur several hundred years before the coming of the Messiah confirms how unacceptable it is to fail to have this spirit in our day.** The people of God – or those who have chosen to live by faith – have always been attracted to one another. They have always placed a high value on one another, whether they were a band of faithful people in an unfaithful generation like those of Malachi’s day

(Mal 3:16-17), or a group of disciples at Troaz coming together to “break bread” and hear Paul (Acts 20:7).

The Words of Jesus

Jesus once promised, “*Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*”

(Matt 18:19-20). **Meeting together is not merely the fulfillment of an obligation!** It is also the opportunity to address serious matters that are too weighty for a single individual.

The principle of love one for another is being lived out in our text. Such love joins the hearts of those possessing it to come before the Lord together, in order to more fully meet each others needs.

THE MERCIES OF GOD, AND WHAT THEY CAN DO

“¹⁸ That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” Daniel has a purpose for telling his friends about Nebuchadnezzar’s decision. It was certainly not to merely pass along the information, or to discuss among themselves why such a terrible thing was happening to them.

DEBILITATING INFLUENCES

There are many advantages to living by faith and walking in the Spirit. One of them is being able to respond to crises in a wise, profitable, and God-honoring manner. It is, however, possible to live at such a distance from God that the time of trouble makes you worse instead of better. **When the heart is not in fellowship with God, threats and trouble cannot move you closer to Him.** Spiritual life is so designed as to not allow one to enjoy Divine benefits apart from intimacy with the Source of those benefits. Many a disappointed soul is only reaping the harvest of walking after the flesh instead of in the faith.

Without belaboring this point, the spiritually perilous times in which we live have allowed professing believers to live in a near-total unconsciousness of the Lord of glory. The truth of the matter is that many see no real need for the Word of God, the grace of God, or the people of God. Such a person is living in practical alienation from God. Like those who do not engage in a quest for the Lord, “*God*

is not in all his thoughts” (Psa 10:5).

Let me be quite clear about this. God is **not** inclined to run to the aid of those who live apart from Him. When Israel chose to give their hearts to other gods, and to forget the God who delivered them, He refused to hear them in the time of trouble. Thus He said to Jeremiah, “*Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble*” (Jer 11:14). For some, this is a saying that is too hard – yet it is the truth. **No person should expect to be honored by God**

be ingested. **Those who live in spiritual squalor cannot expect to have large bags of spiritual supply handed to them in the time of trouble.** If God is not needed to maintain the environment in which we live, we greatly err in thinking our needs will be met by Him at critical times.

Daniel knows how to respond at this unfavorable time because he has been living by faith. God has been at the center of his thinking, thus it is not difficult to resort to Him for immediate help. **In the hour of crisis, men will gravitate to the place where they have spent**

NO PERSON SHOULD EXPECT TO BE HONORED BY GOD WHO REFUSES TO HONOR HIM IN THEIR THOUGHTS, DESIRES, AND PURPOSES.

who refuses to honor Him in their thoughts, desires, and purposes.

Spiritually Dead Environments

Those who choose spiritually dead environments must consider the effects such will have upon their spirits in the hour of crisis. I understand this is a most bitter herb for the soul, but it really must

their time and garnered their resources.

DESIRING THE MERCIES OF GOD

There is a most valuable thing to be learned in this passage. Remember, Daniel and his friends have already been given a vastly superior supply of wisdom and knowledge. Under careful

examination by the king himself, they have *“in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them **ten times better** than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm”* (Dan 1:20).

Yet, in this case, Daniel cannot simply draw upon his reservoir of wisdom. In fact, the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the four young men could not meet the demands of the king. **They would have to ask the Lord for more wisdom and precise understanding.**

The gifts and graces of God do not come to men to be stored up and kept for some future time. In the case of Daniel

reminded of this. When wisdom was required, he did not go to some notes that he had written, but to the God who granted him wisdom.

Nature Has No Well with Water

Daniel knew it, and we must realize it also: nature has no well with water for the soul, or enduring supplies for the mind. **When Adam sinned, the cisterns of both heart and mind were broken, and were no longer capable of holding needed supplies.** It is tragic that professed Christians still attempt to draw water from these *“broken cisterns”* (Jer 2:13). They do well to learn from Daniel to run quickly to the Lord, and urge kindred believers do the same.

full well the inclination of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were his *“companions,”* not in bodily presence only, but in faith and hope as well.

Because these four lived by faith, They were able to quickly acclimate to the spiritual surroundings that had been produced. It took only a word to bring them into productive action.

This is yet another benefit of living by faith. The person who walks in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7), will be able to rally more quickly to godly causes, be *“instant in prayer”* (Rom 12:12), and is thus *“prepared unto every good work”* (2 Tim 2:21). Such are *“ready always”* (1 Pet 3:15).

Mercies

“That they would desire mercies.” And what is it that Daniel admonishes his friends to *“desire”* of the Lord, plead for, and implore the Lord for with fervency? It is not wisdom! It is not knowledge! It is not an interpretation! Rather, it is *“mercies.”* Some versions use the word in the singular (*“compassion,”* ^{NASB} and *“mercy.”* ^{NIV/NRSV}). However, the word is plural, and is thus used to *“express intensity.”* ^{Hebrew Wordbook}

From the standpoint of language, *“mercies”* means pity or compassion. ^{Strongs} However, that by no means suggests that only Divine attitude is involved. *“Mercies”* withhold harmful things from us, and bring good things to us. **“Mercies” are a Divine repository of good things.** The individual who receives *“mercies”* obtains infinitely more than *“pity,”* as ordinarily perceived. The following texts will serve to confirm this.

☐ *“I am not worthy of the least of all the **MERCIES**, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto thy servant”* (Gen 32:10).

☐ *“Yet thou in thy manifold **MERCIES** forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go. Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldst not thy manna from their*

THE GIFTS AND GRACES OF GOD DO NOT COME TO MEN TO BE STORED UP AND KEPT FOR SOME FUTURE TIME. IN THE CASE OF DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS, THEY DID NOT HAVE A VAST SUPPLY OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE IN ESCROW, TO BE TAPPED AS NEEDED.

and his friends, they did not have a vast supply of wisdom and knowledge in escrow, to be tapped as needed.

The way in which God gives needs to us was pictured in the manna. It came in abundant supply for hundreds of thousands of wilderness sojourners. But they could not store it up in barns – not even in weekly supplies. It came in daily doses that were sufficient to meet their needs. The only exception was on the day before the Sabbath day. Because God forbade them to gather manna on the Sabbath, He gave them a double portion the day before. However, that was the only exception to the rule. When some Israelites tried to keep the manna until the next day, *“it bred worms, and stank”* (Ex 16:20). **What Israel was given was to be used, not stored.**

So it was with the wisdom and knowledge that were given to Daniel. It was given when it was needed, and was to be used when it was received. Unlike many of our day, Daniel did not need to be

Desiring

“That they would desire mercies.” The manner in which Daniel speaks to his companions is most arresting. He does not exhort them to join him in seeking for wisdom and understanding. Instead, he asks them to **“desire”** something – to let this matter effect their hearts. Other versions read *“seek,”* ^{NKJV} *“request,”* ^{NASB} *“plead,”* ^{NIV} *“ask,”* ^{Douay} *“implore,”* ^{NAB} and *“beg.”* ^{NJB}

The word *“desire”* includes the idea of fervency in pleading. It is the type of tenacity Jacob had with the heavenly messenger when he said, *“I will not let thee go, except thou bless me”* (Gen 32:26).

The thought occurs to me how exceedingly difficult it is to simply demand that a person *“desire”* of *“implore”* a thing. The very admonition presumes not only an ability to want the right thing, but an appetite for it as well. When Daniel made this request, he knew

mouth” (Neh 9:19-20).

- ▶ “. . . and according to thy manifold **MERCIES** thou gavest them saviors, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies” (Neh 9:27).
- ▶ “Withhold not thou thy tender **MERCIES** from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me” (Psa 40:11).
- ▶ “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great **MERCIES** will I gather thee” (Isa 54:7).
- ▶ “I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his **MERCIES**, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses” (Isa 63:7).
- ▶ “And I will show **MERCIES** unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land” (Jer 42:12).

Mercies provide for those who have need – even though they have nothing of themselves with which to procure that need. In these few texts, we see the provision of Divine direction, tutelage, manna, deliverers, salvation from enemies, preservation, gathering the people together, and great goodness. “Mercies,” therefore, are not merely overlooking conditions that merit Divine wrath. The employment of them is not simply to withhold judgment and condemnation. “Mercies” **BRING** something of inestimable value to those who seek them. **Daniel and his companions are desiring the “mercies” of God to bring wisdom and understanding to Daniel.**

“Mercies” Postulate A Fallen Condition

We must not overlook that the very use of the word “mercies” postulates a fallen condition. When Adam sinned, “sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). It makes no difference if it is four young men in Babylon, a mass of Israelites enslaved by

Egypt, or David lamenting his sin against Uriah the Hittite – “**mercies**” are a **requirement for all men!** There are no sins recorded against Joseph or Daniel, but they needed “mercies.” Only one sin is recorded against Adam and Eve, and they needed “mercies” as well. Wicked Manasseh lived in grievous sins for several decades, and required God’s “mercies.” Still, with all of his transgressions, it was not the number of transgressions he committed that put him in need of “mercies.”

It is man’s nature that requires God’s “mercies,” not merely his conduct. Since man sinned, God must humble Himself to even behold our race. Thus it is written, “Who is like

God. There are higher plateaus that can only be reached by the mercies of God. One such pinnacle is the presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. This is said to be done through “*the mercies of God*” (Rom 12:1).

Holy aspirations, as well as deliverances, are received on the wings of God’s “mercies.” Divine supplies, as well as remission and longsuffering, are obtained through “mercies.” Whether or not these four young men could have delivered an insightful disquisition on this subject, I do not know. But they knew it in their hearts, and sensed it in their spirits. We can do the same, rising to even more lofty heights than they, because we have been raised to sit together with

STILL, WITH ALL OF HIS TRANSGRESSIONS, IT WAS NOT THE NUMBER OF TRANSGRESSIONS HE COMMITTED THAT PUT HIM IN NEED OF “MERCIES.” IT IS MAN’S NATURE THAT REQUIRES GOD’S “MERCIES,” NOT MERELY HIS CONDUCT.

unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth” (Psa 113:5-6).

All of this may appear inconsequential, and even demeaning to the sons of men. If that is how men feel, they need to exercise themselves to put down such feelings. If you are going to receive anything from the Lord, it will come because He is merciful – and that in abundance. That is precisely why Daniel told Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to desire “mercies” from the Lord.

“Mercies” Do Not Presume Specific Sin

Lest there be a gross misapplication of this truth, it should be stated that “mercies” do not presume specific sin – like that of David, Manasseh, Peter, or Paul. Daniel and his friends are certainly not being charged with a particular transgression, and that is not why they are desiring “mercies” from

Christ in “heavenly places” (Eph 2:6).

THE GOD OF HEAVEN

“... the God of heaven . . .” The language here is important. Daniel urges his friends to “to plead for mercy [mercies] from **the God of heaven.**”^{NIV} While men may tend to take this for granted, it is not taken for granted by the Lord. Much is made of this: “the God of heaven.” It is not a trite religious saying, to be thrown about as though it meant nothing. Consider how the Spirit speaks on this matter.

- ▶ **Abraham.** “And I will make thee swear by the LORD, **the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell**” (Gen 24:3). “**The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father’s house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying,**

Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence” (Gen 24:7).

- ▶ **Cyrus.** *“Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath **the LORD God of heaven** given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up” (2 Chron 36:23).*
- ▶ **Ezra.** *“And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of **the God of heaven** and earth, and build the house that was builded*

the residence of God, although it does include that. *“God IS in heaven”* (Eccl 5:2), and Jesus taught us to recognize this in our prayers: *“Our Father which ART in heaven”* (Matt 6:9).

This is a recognition of a Sovereign God in a superior and dominating realm. Nebuchadnezzar learned the heard way that *“the heavens do rule”* (Dan 4:26). Moses referred to the *“heaven of heavens,”* saying it belonged to the Lord (Deut 10:14). Even that, Solomon confessed, *“cannot contain Him”* (2 Chron 2:6). Therefore, we are speaking of much more than location.

David put it this way, *“Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power,*

understanding to Daniel, it may be said, *“For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?”* ^{NIV} (Isa 14:27).

God has pronounced judgment against all other gods. His pronouncement is plain and to the point. *“The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion”* (Jer 10:11-12). That is involved in the expression *“the God of heaven.”*

Another Principle to Be Seen

There is yet another principle to be seen here. There is a certain quality in God that compels Him to reveal what He is going to do to His prophets. Amos puts this into words. *“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he **revealeth His secret** unto his servants the prophets”* (Amos 3:7). Whether Daniel and his companions knew this cognitively or not, I do not know. But they certainly knew it intuitively, for that is a perception that characterizes faith.

IF GOD WILLS TO REVEAL THE DREAM AND ITS MEANING TO DANIEL, THERE IS NOT A PERSON ON EARTH OR DIABOLICAL SPIRIT UNDER IT THAT WILL BE ABLE TO STOP IT. THAT IS CERTAINLY SOMETHING TO BE BELIEVED, BUT IT IS TRUE, WHETHER IT IS BELIEVED OR NOT.

these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up” (Ezra 5:11).

- ▶ **Nehemiah.** *“And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before **the God of heaven**, and said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments”* (Neh 1:4-5).
- ▶ **David.** *“O give thanks unto **the God of heaven**: for his mercy endureth for ever”* (Psa 136:26).
- ▶ **Jonah.** *“And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear **the LORD, the God of heaven**, which hath made the sea and the dry land”* (Jonah 1:9).

This is not simply a reference to

and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all” (1 Chron 29:11). Jesus taught us to express it this way, *“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever”* (Matt 6:13).

Because God is *“in the heavens,”* *“He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased”* (Psa 115:3). From the heavens, His great power is exercised without hindrance in all domains. As it is written, *“Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places”* (Psa 135:6).

“The God of heaven” is the ruling One, who shouts out to all personalities, *“Indeed before the day was, I am He; And there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?”* ^{NKJV} (Isa 43:13). When He purposes a thing, whether it be the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, or the granting of

By pleading for *“mercies”* from the God of heaven, Daniel and his friends are recognizing the power of the Lord, as well as the impotence of men. **If God wills to reveal the dream and its meaning to Daniel, there is not a person on earth or diabolical spirit under it that will be able to stop it.** That is certainly something to be believed, but it is true, whether it is believed or not. Believing it puts God on your side – WITH all of His power and resources.

A Noble Example for Us All

Indeed, we have in this text a noble example for us all. Without question, God *“is above all”* (Eph 4:6). He towers above all adversarial personalities, whether the devil himself, or the hierarchy that functions under his delegated leadership. **Thus, effectual prayers are offered with God being more in consideration than the circumstance.** When we stand in the glory of God, circumstance becomes small.

If you do not presently have a

crisis on your hand, it will not be long until you will. As long as you are in the world, you are in a hostile realm – one in which an Omnipotent God is needed. It is good to know that is precisely the kind of God we have, and that He is kindly disposed to us in Christ Jesus.

THE SECRET

“ . . . concerning the secret . . . ”

Other versions use the word “mystery.” In Scripture, a “secret,” or “mystery,” is something that cannot be known independently of God. It is something that is “hidden” by God, and can only be known as He is disposed to make it known.

There are two classes of “secret” things. There are secrets that God is disposed to reveal, and secrets that will not be revealed to men in the earth. Of these Scriptures declare, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever” (Deut 29:29). Praise the Lord, all secrets are not in the first category. In either case, however, if God does not reveal the secret, it cannot be known. No human wisdom can dig it out. No language expert can uncover what Paul heard when he was transported to the “third heaven” (2 Cor 12:2).

Hiding Power

To confirm that what God hides cannot be discovered through human ingenuity, Scripture speaks of the salvation of God as a “secret.” Here is a purpose “which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God” (Eph 3:9). It was a fully developed purpose, with every facet designed for the glory of God. It included a Lamb “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8), who “was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet 1:20). It even involved a “kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25:34). In its entirety, this was “the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints” (Col 1:26).

The Grand Purpose of God

This grand purpose was revealed in an embryonic form before Adam and Eve were thrust from the garden (Gen

3:13). God introduced Abraham to it in the promise of a Seed, through whom the whole world would be blessed (Gen 18:18). By means of the Law, types and shadows of this great redemption were developed in remarkable detail (Col 2:16-17; Heb 8:5; 9:8-10; 10:1). The Prophets also spoke of the heart of this purpose, which involved “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet 1:11).

This secret spanned a period of 4,000 years. During the first 2,500 years, only personal revelations were given, and they were very sparse. At no time was the fulness of Divine purpose made known. Adam and Eve heard of the conquering of the devil. Abraham heard of the blessing of the world. David heard of a king whose throne and kingdom would never end. The prophets were told of a Messiah who would make an end of sin, and bring in ever lasting righteousness. But none of

the one possessing it into the heavenly realms. It brings an awareness of God that makes the things of this world look very small.

SHOULD NOT PERISH

“ . . . that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” You will note that Daniel has now surfaced as the leader among the four. Although all of them had received “knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom,” Daniel had excelled in understanding “all kinds of visions and dreams” (1:17). Now the four are no longer referred to as “Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah” (1:11), but as “Daniel and his fellows” (2:13,18), or “Daniel . . . and his companions.”

Thus, the spotlight has moved from scene to scene in the delineation of

IN SCRIPTURE, A “SECRET,” OR “MYSTERY,” IS SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE KNOWN INDEPENDENTLY OF GOD. IT IS SOMETHING THAT IS “HIDDEN” BY GOD, AND CAN ONLY BE KNOWN AS HE IS DISPOSED TO MAKE IT KNOWN.

them could decipher the purpose, or put things together. Forty long centuries passed, and the purpose remained a “secret, hidden from the foundation of the world.”

In God’s Word, and in the sense of our text, only God can reveal a “secret.” Daniel and his companions knew this, and therefore they sought “mercies” from the Lord to reveal both the dream and its meaning to Daniel. The Chaldeans proved utterly inadequate to the challenge. For that matter, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, could not provide the answer either. **The difference with them was that they knew where to go for the answer.** That, of course, is precisely why Daniel will receive what is needed.

It ought to be noted that faith does know where to go. Faith pushes

God’s purpose. First it was upon Nebuchadnezzar (1:1-5). Then it was on an diet that he has imposed (1:6-16). Next it is on the examination of the four children of Judah by the king (1:18-20). Next, the spotlight shines upon Nebuchadnezzar again, and the circumstances relating to a dream he cannot remember (2:1-12). Then the attention turns to the four young captives (2:13). Now, however, the light has settled upon Daniel, who will remain in the spotlight, with only the four in the fiery furnace as an exception.

The Cause Is Stated

In order to assist their prayers, the cause is presented in these words, “so that Daniel and his friends might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.”^{NASB} This was, then, a very real circumstance. No pretending here! If their

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prayers are not answered, all four of them will be ripped to pieces, just like *"the rest of the wise men of Babylon."* You will have to admit, that does provide a strong incentive for fervent prayer and supplication. Perhaps some prayers are not answered because they are not accompanied with a sense of urgency.

Keep in mind they do not have a lot of time to receive the answer. Yet, they

seemed to sense that whatever was about to happen was subject to the will of God, and therefore they set themselves to seek the wisdom that comes alone from Him. **They knew if God's purpose was made known, Nebuchadnezzar's purpose would fall to the ground.** It is still true that the less men know about what God is doing, the more they are subject to what men are doing. When what is above us does not control us, what

is around us will.

Did All the Wise Men Perish?

We do not know if all of the wise men were slain as Nebuchadnezzar decreed. Perhaps some of them were spared for the sake of Daniel and his friends. After all, it was the dream and its meaning that he desired above all else. I will not take the luxury of indulging in such speculations, as they really serve no purpose.

The attention and control has now shifted to Daniel. His gifts and abilities were given to him for this reason, and he like Esther, has come to the kingdom for such a time as this (Esth 4:14). We will now see the effectiveness of faith to receive the answer that is needed, and to speak it out with boldness.

CONCLUSION

Ponder what we would know about this whole incident if we viewed it as a newspaper reporter, without the advantage of Divine commentary.

- ▶ Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem.
- ▶ Jehoiakim is carried away captive.
- ▶ Part of the vessels of the Lord's house are carried away.
- ▶ The vessels are placed in the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god.
- ▶ The king requires a search for gifted youth among the captives of Judah.
- ▶ Four are chosen from Judah.
- ▶ A strict diet is imposed upon them.
- ▶ At the end of the allotted time, the boys are tested.
- ▶ The boys prove superior in their testing.
- ▶ Nebuchadnezzar has a dream he cannot remember.
- ▶ The wise men of Babylon cannot help him.
- ▶ The king decrees the death of the wise men throughout the realm.
- ▶ A stay of execution is granted to Daniel and his friends.

That is how everything looked *"according to appearance."* But there was more to the circumstance than that!

- ▶ God had given Judah to Nebuchadnezzar.
- ▶ God gave Jehoiakim and part of the vessels from His house to the king.
- ▶ God gave the four children of Judah wisdom and understanding.
- ▶ God gave Daniel favor in the eyes of the man over them.
- ▶ God blessed the boys to be superior through a diet of vegetables and water over all others.
- ▶ God gave them wisdom in all intelligence, literature, and learning.
- ▶ God caused the boys to be *"ten times"*

- ▶ protected from the decree of the king.
- ▶ God causes Nebuchadnezzar to give Daniel time the others were refused.

It is the working of the Lord that makes this account unique – not the circumstances in which Daniel and his friends found themselves.

All of this may seem very apparent in the book of Daniel. However, we are seeing a Divine manner that is not confined to Daniel or his times. It is one thing to see how God worked in the life of

IT IS THE WORKING OF THE LORD THAT MAKES THIS ACCOUNT UNIQUE – NOT THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS FOUND THEMSELVES

- ▶ better than the wise man of the realm.
- ▶ Daniel and his companions were

these young men. It is quite another to perceive how He is working in your own life. We must learn from these things not

to judge according to appearance, or put our trust in the flesh and its seeming abilities. When things are difficult, and circumstances seem like a giant weight to our souls, that does not mean God has abandoned us, or is not imminent in the circumstances of our lives themselves.

If God had not told us what was really happening in the first two chapters of Daniel, we would forever have remained in the dark, just like Nebuchadnezzar. But He has revealed His workings with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in order to assure your heart

of His involvement with you!

If God was for those boys, Nebuchadnezzar could not be against them. And, if God is for you, who is it that you imagine can be against you? Put your faith in God!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 4/5/2002. We will continue in our overview of Daniel, covering verses 19-23 of the second chapter. The lesson is titled, **"DANIEL EXTOLS THE NAME OF THE LORD."** Faith not only seeks the answer from the Lord, it gives due glory to Him when that answer is given. But faith is also insightful. It knows HOW to give glory to God. The stronger the faith, the greater the glory. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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