

## **“DANIEL GETS PROMOTED.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

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**Scripture Texts: Daniel 2:46-49**

### **Introduction.**

There is an old fable that goes like this:

A farmer had only one horse. One day, his horse ran away.  
His neighbors said, “I’m so sorry. This is such bad news. You must be so upset.”  
The man just said, “We’ll see.”

A few days later, his horse came back with twenty wild horses following. The man and his son corralled all 21 horses.  
His neighbors said, “Congratulations! This is such good news. You must be so happy!”  
The man just said, “We’ll see.”

One of the wild horses kicked the man's only son, breaking both his legs.  
His neighbors said, “I’m so sorry. This is such bad news. You must be so upset.”  
The man just said, “We’ll see.”

The country went to war, and every able-bodied young man was drafted to fight. The war was terrible and killed every young man, but the farmer's son was spared, since his broken legs prevented him from being drafted.  
His neighbors said, “Congratulations! This is such good news. You must be so happy!”  
The man just said, “We’ll see.”

There is wisdom and humility in this man. I could rewrite the fable using Daniel’s life:

Daniel and his friends are exiled to Babylon. That’s bad news right?  
Daniel and his friends are selected to live in the king’s palace. That’s good news right?  
Daniel and his friends refuse to eat the king’s food. That’s bad.  
Daniel and his friends prosper and receive favor from the king. That’s good.  
Daniel and his friends are ordered to be killed with all the other wise men. That’s bad.  
Daniel is given the interpretation to the king’s dream and promoted. That’s good.  
Daniel’s friends are ordered to bow to the golden image. That’s bad.

Blessings and curses sometimes wear the same mask. A blessing to one may be a curse to another. Sometimes good comes out of bad and sometimes bad comes out of good.

**Philippians 4:11-13** I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

This is indeed the secret to life, to be content in all situations and circumstances; to be content is to want what you have, to want to be where you are; to receive all things as from the Lord and to entrust ourselves body and soul to Him completely.

### **Nebuchadnezzar's public praise.**

King Nebuchadnezzar makes a remarkable about face. What a turn around. What a change of fortunes for everyone. His wrath turns to praise and the sentence of death is dropped.

His response is all the more remarkable when you consider kings especially in ancient times were filled with great pride. They were impressed with the glory of their greatness. Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful king of his day. His kingdom was exceedingly great.

In chapter one when Nebuchadnezzar defeated the king of Judah and took Israel captive he arrogantly assumed his gods were superior to Israel's god, after all he won. He even carted off some of the vessels from the house of God with impunity.

So it is no small thing for him to have at least some measure of humility to praise Daniel's God and elevate God's prophet Daniel. He recognizes the greatness of Daniel's God. But we have to be careful to go too far with this or say too much.

Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the one true God but he doesn't confess and repent and believe, there is no conversion, no change of heart. He is awed but not converted.

This will be evident in the next chapter when Nebuchadnezzar forgets this whole experience and shows the hardness of his heart.

He is more like Pharaoh during the ten plagues of Moses (Exodus 9:27; 10:16). He is forced to admit the superiority of Israel's God.

Pharaoh gave glory to God for a moment, but then fell back to his sinful ways, to his treacherous treatment of the people, to his obstinacy, pride, arrogance and deceitful words.

It is a rule of Scripture that *by their fruit you shall know them*. We are best known by our actions. This is why Scripture says we ought not to lay on hands quickly, but give time for the fruit to show.

Quick confessions are cheap and easy. Remember the *parable of the soils*, of people who see or hear something and make an enthusiastic reply but are soon back into the world. Many are the influences and pressures and deceits that make the Word unfruitful in our hearts.

He pays homage to Daniel and makes a tribute to Daniel's God. For a moment anyway he seems to put God above Bel. But notice he still views God as one of the gods. He did not go so far as to say God is the only God, but just the great God among all the gods.

Nebuchadnezzar is a polytheist, there is plenty of room in his mind for plenty of gods and adding one more is no big deal. And even saying this one is chief among them is not big deal.

In the end how *worthless is Nebuchadnezzar's confession* since he remains in the superstitions of his own beliefs and does not make a break from his idolatry of false gods.

But his way is our way, *we all mingle together our idols* with God, making boasts of a good confession while clinging to earthly and worldly things, and so dishonoring God and robbing Him of His glory.

For a moment at least Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes off himself to a higher reality, off his own kingdom to a greater kingdom, off his own earthly glory to one far greater than him.

All world leaders are under God's sovereign control and He can make them acknowledge Him any time He chooses.

**Proverbs 21:1** The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.

Remember again who is reading this. *Jews, exiles*, being held captive against their will in a foreign and pagan land. For them to hear these words from the lips of their captor must have stirred their hearts and built up their flagging spirits.

The temptation was all around them to fall into idolatry and start worshipping the local gods.

Their God put this confession on the lips of this pagan king, he was made to acknowledge that their God is actually supreme among all gods. Not a god of gods but God of the gods.

Not only is their God supreme, greater than all others, but He also reigns over all nations and governments. All peoples everywhere are under His authority. He rules even the kings. To worship any other god is to worship an inferior deity. What hope this is in their despair.

*One question lingers.* Why did Daniel allow Nebuchadnezzar to worship him in this manner? Certainly Nebuchadnezzar is at fault but what about Daniel?

There are other instances in Scripture when men sought to offer worship to men and they were stopped. I think of Peter and Paul in Acts.

**Acts 10:25-26** When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.”

**Acts 14:14-15** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, 15 “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you

God will share the glory that belongs to Him with no one else. Nothing must be taken from God that belongs only to God.

Was Daniel somewhat corrupted by the glory of the palace and courts?

It is possible that indeed Daniel did say something and even stopped the king from these actions. Verse 47 begins “The king answered and said.”

If Daniel would not even eat the king’s food out of deference to his God, if he would rather be thrown into a lion’s den than not pray to his God, he certainly would not dare to receive worship that belonged only to God.

It may be that Nebuchadnezzar’s actions were not to Daniel himself, but to honor the God Daniel represents. He acknowledges the God who gave Daniel this wisdom.

Based on this wisdom the king elevates Daniel to a position of authority in the kingdom and over the wise men.

### **Daniel’s public promotion.**

At least we can say Nebuchadnezzar was a man of his word.

**Daniel 2:6** If you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor.

Daniel was given the highest seat in the king’s court, like Joseph in Pharaoh’s court. He was made a man of great power and authority, a ruler over the province of Babylon and was made a prefect or chief officer over all the Babylonian wise men.

One wonders how the wise men felt about having this Jewish exile placed over them. But then their gods nearly got them killed and Daniel’s God saved their lives.

To be given great wealth and great power and at so young an age is a great spiritual danger to the soul. So much success and power given to a teenagers who then used his office for gain, for the sake of friends and family.

It is terrible when public servants with the public's trust usurp or take advantage. And it is especially terrible when God's servants do the same.

But Daniel has already shown his ability to have integrity and to resist the temptations and allurements of the royal life.

Daniel used his office to the benefit of his people, like Joseph and Esther before him. He is an instrument in God's hand to bring good to His people. He sought to look out for his oppressed people.

He is a wise leader, he doesn't think he can do it all alone, nor does he assume he can or try. He knows the necessity of delegating and sharing leadership and responsibility. He has the ability to let go and not grasp.

### **Implications and Application.**

First, how do we live in this world without becoming part of it? How do we live like Daniel, balancing faithful obedience to God were we must and faithful civic service in our secular world?

Daniel is an incredible example of how to walk the tight rope, balancing loyalties to God and to the king, navigating the tricky waters of loyalty to his homeland and loyalty to his adoptive land. They are fiercely faithful to God at the risk of their life, yet that doesn't always mean they can't submit to the king and help the leaders and people of Babylon.

So we balance our supreme loyalty to God with our call to be salt and light and to be a blessing to the nations where we live.

Second, this morning I spoke about testing that comes through suffering. There is testing that comes through success as well. How do we respond to good things that happen to us?

We must be good stewards of all our successes as well as of our suffering. Both must be stewarded, keep in their proper place, submitted always to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We often tend to forget God in our successes and victories and achievements. We must continually acknowledge that everything comes from God, everything belongs to Him, it's all grace. We must hold all things loosely, our health, our finances, our families, our jobs, all the days of our life.

All testing is designed to draw us closer to God and to draw out of us an acknowledgement of God and of His grace and goodness in all things, that He is Lord over all things.

How do we respond when our team wins or our candidate is elected or we get the bid or promotion? It is natural and right to celebrate. Joy and praise are necessary compliments to good news and great gifts. Hold them loosely, as a gift, not as a right or entitlement.

How much more should we offer to God praise and thanks for who He is and what He has done. How much more to the good news that our God reigns, that the Gospel has come in Jesus Christ.

How much more should we worship at the news that God is sovereign and bringing all things under the Lordship of His Son.

How much more at the news that the Rock is Christ and that He will crush all opposition and bring all things into conformity with His will.

Those who oppose Him will be shattered, those who submit to Him will be exalted and glorified and reign with Him forever and ever. Amen.

Give God praise and glory.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, make our faith as steadfast and unwavering as Daniel's. May we stand for Jesus and His Gospel at whatever cost. Make us faithful to the end, for your glory.