

# THE FIRST PRAYER OF THE REST OF YOUR LIFE

DANIEL 2:14-23 SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

We're going to begin in Daniel, chapter 2, verse 14 this evening.

When the police come knocking on your door, it's not *typically* a good thing. They're not really in the business of giving out prizes or good news. Every now and then, the police themselves get a surprise when they knock on a door. A few years ago, around Christmas time, Ohio police shared a story and picture on social media. Two officers knocked on the door of a wrong address. "After the house owner opened the door, the officers noticed that there was a decorated Christmas tree inside the house. It was not-your-usual tree because, on each ornament, there was a message." They held the names of every human and K9 officer killed in the line of duty in 2016. The owner called it a "Tree of Honor."<sup>1</sup> Naturally, the post spread through social media and on news outlets.

In our text, the Babylonian police come knocking on Daniel's door. It's more than just a police visit, the palace guard arrives to take Daniel and his friends to be torn limb from limb. When we last left off, King Nebuchadnezzar had had a dream that mystified and terrified him. When his experts were unable to tell him what his dream was and its meaning, he ordered that all the wise men be wiped out. Now, as they were being rounded up, the executioner gets to Daniel's door. They come to kill, but the Lord comes to the rescue and, rather than just becoming another victim, Daniel becomes the man with the *answer* that Nebuchadnezzar is so desperate for.

Tonight, as we see how Daniel came by this knowledge, we'll see his plan, his prayer and his praise to the Lord in *response* to God sharing the secret of the dream.

As we begin in verse 14, the scene we're dropping in on is pretty straightforward. But we'll get a look at the grace of God, His power working on behalf of His people and how a believer can exercise a *confident* trust in the Lord, even in the most pressing of circumstances.

**Daniel 2:14 - <sup>14</sup> Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise *men* of Babylon;**

In these stories, Daniel always demonstrates a remarkable calmness. He hears a knock at the door. When he opens it up, there's the head executioner, who explains that he's there to take Daniel to be brutally murdered. No appeals court, no city of refuge. It's a bleak situation. But Daniel stays composed and in control. By the end of our verses we'll get a peek into his thoughts about all this and we'll see that his mind is *full* trust in God. It's the same thing we saw back in chapter 1 with the vegetable test. Daniel *trusts* God. Not just that God *exists*, but that God *acts* and *intervenes* on behalf of His people.

All 4 of these guys consistently believe that God is going to *do* something in their midst. And they not only believe it *intellectually* or *hypothetically*, that God *could* do something, but they hang the weight of their lives on this belief. They orient their decisions according to this belief.

That doesn't mean that they're passive all the time. In fact, we see Daniel *acting* in chapter 1 and here in chapter 2. We'll see it with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in chapter 3. They don't just sit passively and wait for God to split the heavens and smite their enemies. They work out a plan of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://inspiring.ntd.tv/life/anonymous-cops-knock-on-the-wrong-door-seeing-whats-inside-they-realize-its-no-coincidence.html>

action in these situations. But when they act it is never to *save themselves*. Rather, they act in ways that honor God while *expecting* Him to do what *He* does: To intervene and show Himself strong through their lives.

It says there that Daniel spoke with counsel and wisdom. He acted with prudence and discretion. He did *not* act *rashly*. That's a great characteristic of Daniel. When we see him in these famous stories, he has to act *quickly*, but he never acts *rashly*. In this scene, he has to act *in the moment*. There was no waiting period. But we see that his response to the situation was wise and thoughtful because it flowed from the deep resources of his relationship with God. He had an overflowing supply of faith and truth and peace and, because of that, he was able to respond quickly.

I'd also have us note that when the executioner came, he and Daniel had a *conversation*, not a *conflict*. Daniel didn't pull a knife and try to stab his way out. He trusted the Lord to defend him as he put a plan into action. Here's what he said:

**Daniel 2:15 - <sup>15</sup> he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel.**

When Daniel uses the word "urgent" here, it can mean "cruel" or "unkind" or "uncivil." Daniel was never one to shy away from speaking plainly, but he did so with humility and respect for Arioch.

Arioch responded by saying, "This is the *decision* Nebuchadnezzar has made." Man may think he "decides" but it is God who superintends. We can be sure that God is in charge. That is a great theme of the entire book and it is especially highlighted in the prophetic portions.

**Daniel 2:16 - <sup>16</sup> So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation.**

Now, this is remarkable. Nebuchadnezzar was in no mood to grant wishes to these condemned wise men. He was likely to have Daniel cut down right then and there in the throne room. And yet, Daniel goes boldly in and makes this request. Compare this scene to the famous throne room scene of Esther. In *that* situation, Esther is the queen, her Jewish identity is safely hidden. And yet, because she was living a *carnal*, ungodly life at the time, she lived in *fear*. She didn't want to go in and talk to her husband. She has to be exhorted to do it by her uncle. Now look at Daniel. You've got a *maniac* on the throne who has said, "I want every wise man dead." And you, *as a wise man* say, "You know what, I'm gonna go ask him for a favor!" What's the difference? Well the difference is that Daniel was walking in Godliness and Esther was not. And so, as a Godly man, Daniel experienced the promise we read about in the New Testament where we find that we have *not* been given a spirit of fear, but of power and God's perfect love *casts out* fear. Daniel models that promise for us.

**Daniel 2:17-18 - <sup>17</sup> Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, <sup>18</sup> that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.**

So the guys had a prayer meeting. Throughout the Bible, again and again, we consistently see the importance and value of God's people praying *together*. Of course, your *personal*, individual prayer life is indispensable and essential. But we should pay attention to the importance of God's people praying together. That's why we try to make opportunities for us as a local church to be doing just

that, whether it's here on Wednesday nights or every Saturday night at our prayer meeting. God's people, *praying together*, is valuable and a vital aspect of Christianity.

When these young men went to God in prayer, they appealed to His compassionate mercy, showing that *despite everything that had happened*, they still had hope. They still saw God as merciful and compassionate. So, their prayer was, "Lord, only You can save us, so we're asking You to save us that we might not perish."

What a great type for us of how a person can receive *eternal* salvation. There's only one way out of death: That's by the intervention of God. How do you get that rescue? By asking in faith for God to pour out His compassion. It's by grace, through faith, not of works. There was nothing Daniel could do to save himself from death. But of course, God comes through for these boys, reminding us that, when it comes to salvation, the Lord will never turn away anyone who truly seeks after Him.

**Lamentations 3:22 - <sup>22</sup>Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.**

**Psalms 103:13 - <sup>13</sup>As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him.**

**John 6:37 - <sup>37</sup>All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.**

So, this evening, if you are *not* a Christian, you're like a wise man of Babylon. You've been condemned to death. If you want to live and not perish for eternity, pray to God like Daniel did. Ask God to save you tonight by His grace and He will not refuse you.

**Daniel 2:19 - <sup>19</sup>Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.**

The secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream came to Daniel and, with that get-out-of-jail-free card in hand, the very first thing he did was *rush* to the palace so that he could save himself from a grizzly death. No...The *first* thing he did was compose a song of praise to the Lord. That is pretty remarkable, because I'm guessing that Nebuchadnezzar had given Daniel a limited amount of time to come up with the answer. But Daniel goes to the throne room of *heaven* before he went to the throne of Babylon. And in this prayer song he magnifies God as One who gives generously and One who has the ultimate authority over all the world.

**Daniel 2:20 - <sup>20</sup>Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His.**

They are *His* and not *ours*. Your life, your intellect, your strength, all came from your Maker. Back in 2012, President Obama created a PR firestorm when, in a speech, he said, "If you've got a business, you didn't build that, somebody else made that happen."<sup>2</sup> While pundits argue over that, Daniel says "Your wisdom and your might and the breath in your lungs is *not* from you, it is from the God of Heaven." God is the Maker. And, if you're a Christian here tonight, God is *still* making you. He's fashioning you more and more into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKjPl6no5ng>

I like how the verse opens. It says: “Daniel *answered*.” It’s written as if it was a response. Because it was a response. God had worked in a wonderful way and Daniel *responded*. I find it’s far too easy in my own life to just take the Lord for granted. His working in my life. His grace and His care and His many gifts and blessings. It’s like the way I think about the tap water in my house. It’s just the tap. I don’t really marvel at the fact that I *have* it or that it’s clean and clear. In the mean time, the World Health Organization estimates that 3.4 million people die every year from water-related diseases.<sup>3</sup> 146 million people on earth are blind because their water was contaminated. But I just take my water for granted. Or worse, find ways to *complain* about it!

Daniel here encourages us to *respond* to God. To take a look at all He does moment by moment to love us and give to us and care for us and then to not take it for granted, but answer the Lord with worship and praise and proclamation. We should be people who not only *receive* but *respond*.

**Daniel 2:21 - <sup>21</sup>And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.**

Back in verse 9, Nebuchadnezzar had chillingly said, “you’re trying to change the time, but it’s up to me.” In reality, we see it is *God* who has this power. He has absolute authority over the *situation* Daniel found himself in (the times and seasons), over the *source* of Daniel’s trouble (the king) and the Lord had absolute authority to supply the *solution* to Daniel’s trouble (wisdom and knowledge).

And, you know what? Verse 21 is just as true today as it was 2,600 years ago. And so we should pray, like Daniel, “Lord, alter our times! Lord raise up good kings.” And, since God has wisdom and knowledge to give, we should pray Psalm 25:4-5:

**Psalm 25:4-5a - <sup>4</sup>Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. <sup>5</sup>Lead me in Your truth and teach me,**

**Daniel 2:22 - <sup>22</sup>He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what *is* in the darkness, And light dwells with Him.**

The God of the Bible is not only a God of *power*, but of *revelation*. And He bids us come and have our lives lit up. How? We’re told how in both Testaments:

**Psalm 119:105 - <sup>105</sup>Your word *is* a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**

**John 8:12 - <sup>12</sup>Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”**

You want to have your life lit up? Go to the Scriptures and follow Jesus Christ.

**Daniel 2:23 - <sup>23</sup>“I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, And have now made known to me what we asked of You, For You have made known to us the king’s demand.”**

He calls the Lord, “God of my fathers.” He may find himself as a captive in Babylon, sentenced for death, and yet Daniel knew God had not failed. He had not failed Daniel personally, He had not failed

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/takingcharge.html](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/takingcharge.html)

Israel, He had not failed His promises. Daniel knew the Law of Moses, he knew the stories of Jehovah's work through history. He knew God's promises. And he thought to himself, "Yep. All that is *still* true. God is the same." Just as He was God to Abraham, He's God to me.

And that is true for us as well. The same God. Daniel reminded himself by saying, the "God of my fathers." Perhaps it would be good for us to say in our prayers (from time to time), "God of my Bible." The God who does *these* things, who makes *these* promises, is still God. He is still able. He is still with us.

Like Daniel, we can *trust* God and declare what He has done in prayer and in worship and in public testimony. We can *acknowledge* how He has answered our prayers and done great things and worked on our behalf. And we get to do that *right now!* As we sing and pray and spend a few moments in corporate worship together, honor God not just in your mind, but from your lips. And remember how great and how good a God He is.