

Godly Living In A Godless World

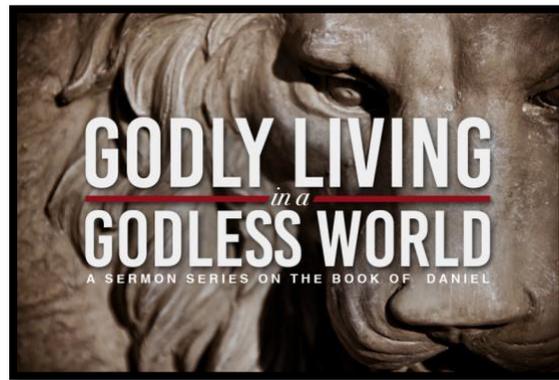
Expositional Study Of Daniel

Daniel 2:24-30

Written By

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God's rich, amazing, and sometimes surprising blessing on your life is never static. On the contrary, it is dynamic insofar as it, typically, calls you to a higher plane of spiritual living. We see this eternal truth inscribed on the pages of the book of Daniel. Really, we see it displayed in high definition color in and through Daniel's life after he received inside information from God regarding the content of King Nebuchadnezzar's mysterious, troubling dream.

God blessed him with this esoteric, off-the-chart insight and he turned to bless the various facets of God's infinite character which made the educational vision possible in the first place. Before we move on, we have to pause and pose the practical question from this truth one more time: If God has recently blessed you in a jaw-dropping fashion, have you blessed His character which made the blessing possible? That's what Daniel did, and it's what maturing saints do, too.

Beyond this, Daniel took the divine blessing to a whole new level in chapter 2, verses 24 through 30 when he actually acted upon it. What do I mean by this? I mean, he thanked God for the precise insight into the mind of the king, and then he turned to use that particular blessing to oppose the false worldview of the sorcerers and to build a bridge to the godless, spiritually adrift and misled king. In this we unearth a timeless principle for ourselves 2,500 years later. When God blesses us by means of His awe-inspiring character, we need to look around and ask ourselves some questions:

- Does this divine blessing on my life illustrate God has strategically placed me to advance His kingdom?
- If so, what, exactly, does God want me to do or say, or where does He want me to go?
- Have I blessed Him for blessing me without considering if this particular blessing is carefully designed by His hands to position me to accomplish something for Him?

Spiritually maturing saints like Daniel ask these questions and then move out with impassioned purpose. Are you ready to move out? To assist you to that rewarding, culture changing end, I invite you to consider an answer to the question before us:

When God Blesses You, Do You Serve Him? (Daniel 2:24-30)

That's exactly what Daniel did. He realized God had strategically placed him in the higher echelons of the Babylonian Empire to advance His kingdom purposes. Imagine that. This twenty-something-year-old, a captive in a foreign land, cut off from friends and family, had the spiritual tenacity to realize that even in this God was sovereign and purposeful. Wise saints, regardless of their age, pause and ask themselves a pivotal life question: God I see you have blessed me greatly and I praise you for that, but now I must know what you want me to do for you? Ask and He'll show you.

Daniel knew exactly what God wanted him to do. Two pragmatic principles readily emerge from a cursory reading of the passage before us:

Serve Him With Courage (Daniel 2:24-27)

I fear too many saints in our post-modern, godless, persecutory age cower in fear when they realize they have been divinely placed to be a light for Jesus Christ in the cultural darkness.

- They fear retaliation or humiliation if they speak up and call sin, sin.
- They worry they'll jettison career advancement if they push back against sensitivity training that calls them to be sensitive to outright evil.
- They worry their grades will be docked, or they'll wind up as a story in the school paper.
- They think it is just wiser to go along to get along, all for the sake of peace.
- They wrongly interpret and apply Christ's words in Matthew not to judge (Matthew 7:1) to mean they should never judge, but the conclusion is self-defeating because they made a judgment to even make the claim .
- They fear being vilified in the press.
- They fear looking adversarial and unfriendly.

When saints lack courage to stand up for the light of truth, darkness advances ... rapidly.

Such is not a snapshot of Daniel's life. From the moment his worn, frayed Jewish sandals hit the soil of Babylon, he bravely, kindly, and stylishly opposed the false religious and political worldview of Babylon. Admiral Nimitz's words could have easily applied to Daniel, "God grant me the courage not to give up what I think is right, even though I think it is hopeless."¹ Outwardly, Daniel's situation did look hopeless, but with God's revelation firmly in hand, the young man knew he had to make a strong stand for God. We can, and should, do no less. Read on and you will see a gutsy saint in action.

²⁴ Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king."

Stop right there.

"Therefore" (**lbeäq\lK'**) is an Aramaic expression denoting a pivot in the story, and its placement at the head of the Hebrew sentence makes it most emphatic. For our purposes it readily denotes that Daniel did not just bless God for the dream insight, but that he turned and took immediate action. Makes you wonder if you have been dragging your spiritual feet on something God wants you to do for Him after you've seen His blessing on your life. Daniel sprung into courageous action by going to Arioch, the chief executioner. This is probably not the guy you want to see too often, and his door is probably one you do not want to knock on too loudly. But Daniel went ... by himself. Woa. Bold move. When's the last time you made a verifiable bold move for Jesus Christ in the face of possible danger, be what it may?

Once in Arioch's presence, as ominous as that must have been, he did not soften his request with something like, "Mr. Head Executioner, I've been thinking about something you might like to know, but I certainly don't want to push you in any fashion." Daniel didn't do that. He gave Arioch an outright command, "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon!" Yeah, you read that right. There is an exclamation point in the biblical text, and rightly so. I find his action here most instructive, especially in our tolerant loving day.

Daniel didn't owe anything to the godless, Devil-worshipping sorcerers of King Nebuchadnezzar. In fact, from what we read in Daniel 3, even after Daniel's exploits here saved their lives, they wasted no time working behind the scenes to get Daniel's friends burned alive for not bowing to the massive image of the king (Daniel 3:8ff). Over in chapter 6, these same sinister men will work overtime to have Daniel killed by having him thrown in a lion's den for praying to his god contrary to their new law prohibiting prayer to any man or gods for thirty days (Daniel 6:1-9).

So much for gratitude for true tolerance. Such is how it goes, though. The believer, like Daniel, is under divine mandate to show tolerance toward those who oppose God's truth, to love them despite their erroneous beliefs; however, as the saint shows true tolerance, a false tolerance rises and moves to cordon off and/or remove the saint from the world stage.

True tolerance means you respectfully "put up with" viewpoints which run counter to yours. This, of course, has been redefined by our clever culture to mean you tolerate all views as equally true, and that you are morally justified to be intolerant especially toward those political

¹ Mark Water, compiler, *The New Encyclopedia of Christian Quotations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 232.

and/or spiritual views (i.e., Christianity), which do not go along with the cultural mantras, be what they may. For a thorough discussion this crucial cultural point, I would direct you to read D.A. Carson's *The Intolerance of Tolerance*.

Anyway, back to the subject at hand: True tolerance versus true intolerance masquerading as tolerance. For years, Judeo-Christian, God-fearing people have tolerated the perpetual encroachment of just about any type of corrosive sin you can imagine, and now those who feel empowered by our tolerance have redefined tolerance so they, like the Babylonian sorcerers, can keep us from having any kind of say in the unraveling and the digression of our culture. Trust me, if we continue to back away from defending truth, be it moral, spiritual or otherwise, we will not like the police state we will live in for the sake of societal peace. Truth is truth, especially when it is biblical truth, and it NEVER changes and it is always the foundation for stability in a life or in a country. That is why it must be defended by bold, brave saints.

So, we must stop and ask, Who is your Arioch? Who is your opponent you should ... and must ... show compassion toward, even if they do not deserve it? Who would exhibit intolerance toward your faith if given half the chance and do it with a smug false moral smile on their face? That is who you should love with the agape love of Christ. What better way to build a bridge to those who oppose the faith and gospel of Jesus?

Daniel's boldness for God did not stop with a request for mercy for the sorcerers, he let Arioch know he had the coveted dream identification and interpretation, and he commanded him to usher him into the king's presence. Again, you have got to say, gusty move. We need more saints like Daniel, and we do have some.

Laura Murphy, one of our parishioners, did all the legal leg work to get House Bill 516 before the State Senate in a quest to have parents simply notified when the school system would be teaching their children about sexual concepts that would make a hardened Marine blush. The bill passed the House 98-0, it passed the Senate 22-17, and it is now going to the Governor's desk for final approval. If it passes, it will set the pace for schools across the nation to give parents the right to shield their children from sexually explicit stories that educators feel they should be exposed to. Opponents predictably shouted the Bill is a move to censor free speech, but this is a deception, pure and simple. Are those who claim this not opposing the free speech of the parents? Laura has taken a lot of heat for the Bill in the press, but her courage is what Daniel inspires believers to emulate in the face of false, morally digressive, damaging worldviews.

Please, don't ever forget: When God blesses you, you need to look around and ask yourself: Why has God blessed me in this fashion and what does He want me to do to push back darkness with His revelatory light? When He shows you what He desires from you, then you must act with inexorable, passionate courage. That's what Daniel did. Read on and you'll see what I mean:

²⁵ Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!"

Isn't this most amusing? Some people can't wait to toot their own horn, to draw attention to themselves, and to make themselves look good. Arioch didn't find Daniel. He merely ended up at his home to execute him, not to see if he could possibly solve the dream enigma. As a sidelight, ol' Arioch forces you to stop and ask yourself, Do I praise myself? Am I a braggart? Do I specialize in elevating myself? Concerning this type of sin, Evan Esar muses, "Some men think

the sun comes up just to hear them crow.”² Been crowing lately? You probably need to stop and consider what true humility means.

After Arioch made his exciting announcement, with his chest inflated, of course, the king questioned and Daniel answered:

²⁶ The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?” ²⁷ Daniel answered before the king and said, “As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

Did you catch the import of Daniel’s answer. Again, gutsy move. In one concise statement he boldly and definitely stated that the whole sorcery/divination worldview was completely bankrupt! And you thought God never wanted you to judge anything. That is merely false piety designed to keep one from courageous and much needed action to advance God’s kingdom purposes.

Daniel gave the wobbly worldview of these charlatans no quarter whatsoever. He showed them no academic niceties. He did not invite them to come and dialogue about who is the true God. He did not worry about offending them and their teaching because he knew its source. He never attempted to be agreeable over spiritual truth when his opponents held a diametrically opposed belief system. He did not exhibit an intellectual largesse because he knew there was no room for discussion about how he knew what he knew. No, he nicely and matter-of-factly verbally exposed their fake belief system. Yes, when absolute divine revelation and truth was on the line, Daniel was quite communicative and courageous. We can, and should, do likewise for they ways of Babylon are still among us, seeking to deceive and destroy in the name of truth.

In addition to his courage in serving the living God’s purposes, Daniel next showed the importance of being ready and willing to ...

Serve Him With Clarity (Daniel 2:28-30)

Watch just how clear he makes biblical truth known to the spiritually misled king:

²⁸ “However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. ²⁹ “As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.

When given the platform to speak up and out for the reality of the existence of the living God, in an empire consumed with the love and worship of many so-called gods, Daniel is, once again, quite emphatic. The opening adverbial conjunction, however, *b^cram* (~r:‡B) tells us this much since it is placed at the head of the sentence. His statement is like drawing a grammatical line in the proverbial sand regarding the reality of a living God who is ontologically in a state of “is-

² [www. Notable-quotes.com/b/bragging_quotes.html](http://www.Notable-quotes.com/b/bragging_quotes.html).

ness” or perpetual being. He did not soften his words by saying, “Look King, there is yet one more god in the pantheon of gods you are not familiar with who just happened to speak with me.” He did not do that. He used a locative preposition wedded to the word “heaven” (aY"m;v.Bi) to point the king in the right direction of the living God. Ah, this is most interesting and deserves further analysis.

The living God, contrary to what naturalists and nihilists think and teach, is not just in the heavens ... He fashioned them. As we read in Genesis 1:3,

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

The immensity of the cosmos, therefore, rightfully belongs to Him, as Moses stated years before Daniel,

“Behold, to the LORD your God belong the heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it” (Deuteronomy 10:14).

He is the uncased One upon which hangs the chain of cause and effect.³ He is the Necessary One upon which all dependent beings/creatures must lean on for life and existence. We are contingent beings, and we cannot, by nature, be classified as a Necessary Being because we can potentially not be, and because this is true we must conclude that non-being cannot in any way create or cause, being. Only a mighty, infinite Being who is fully actualized and has no potential for non-being could possibly create all contingent beings because He always is.

And while we’re talking about it we need to underscore that the whole Babylonian system of multiple gods was erroneous because contained a pantheon of supposedly divine beings differencing in nature. This is impossible in the realm of true deity. You can only ever have one divine being, because if you have another, they would differ, and if they differ, then there is a lack. If there is a lack, then you do not have a god at all. God, by definition, is absolute perfection, meaning there are no areas for change and improvement in His being. This truth, also, negates His ability to create another Necessary being, for if a supposed Necessary being was only potential, then he is not Necessary but contingent, and is therefore not divine.

That’s why I said this statement of Daniel is most interesting. When given the opportunity, he clearly articulated to the king the limitations of his polytheistic spiritual worldview, while also emphasizing the reality of a living, personal God who is in a perpetual state of existence outside our time and space and within our time and space.

A God who is this great can and could, by definition, reveal secret or mysterious information because He possesses perfectly all of the traits of divinity ... like omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, omni-benevolence, infinity, immutability, and so forth. He, who

³ Alister McGrath notes well in his *Mere Apologetics*, 95-96: God’s existence may not be *proved*, in the hard rationalist sense of the word. Yet it can be affirmed with complete sincerity that belief in God is eminently reasonable and makes more sense of what we see in the world, discern in history, and experience in our lives than its alternatives.³

Major premise: Whatever begins to exist has a cause.

Minor premise: The universe began to exist.

Conclusion: Therefore the universe has a cause.

stands above our time and space and sees the past, present, and future as if it is one moment. This is why He can boast in Isaiah 46:

“Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’”

As Dr. Norman Geisler, quoting Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*, aptly states regarding God's omniscience:

“God's knowledge does not change, since He knew in advance it would change. In other words, God knows what we do, but not in the same way that we do; that is, in successive time frames. God knows the whole of time from (in) eternity, but He knows what is before and what is after the temporal now of human history (ibid., Ia.14.13).”⁴

It is this God, the living God that Daniel introduced the godless king to. It is, also, this God who, alone, could possibly give Daniel the dream information requested by the king because of His great and lofty character.

Let me put all this a different way.

King Nebuchadnezzar had, obviously, gone to bed on many evenings wondering about the quality and longevity of his mighty, glorious empire. What is most interesting is God, despite all of His complex cosmic concerns, knew about the king's thought process concerning his rule and reign. It also demonstrates God cared for this godless king, cared enough to tap into his thinking to determine a way to get his attention through a dream. Amazing, isn't it? Perhaps God is attempting to get your attention in an usual fashion. Will you connect the dots?

As Nebuchadnezzar will discover, God would give him a dream of the precise rise and fall, not just of his empire, but of the ones which would follow his over the next several hundred years. He build the dream to a climax, as we shall encounter in our next study, by demonstrating how world history and world kingdoms will be destroyed and replaced by the kingdom of the Messiah. Such is the eschatological nature of the “latter days” Daniel speaks about here (Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1; Hosea 3:5; Ezekiel 38:16).

I find this simply jaw-dropping and worthy of restatement. God paid attention to the King's thought processes, and, then, out of love and concern for him, gave him a precise, troubling dream to put him in contact with a godly young man, Daniel, so would hopefully wake up spiritually. Makes me wonder, What amazing dots has the living God recently connected in your life so bring you to a point of religious belief in God and in redemptive belief in the person and work of His Son, Jesus, the Christ? I highly doubt your exposure to this particular study is by cosmic chance. No. God's fingerprints are all over it and it tells me He is thinking about you and your soul.

As for the believers among us, I can't help but offer this challenge. When God blesses you and places you in a strategic situation for His gospel, He wants you to be courageous and clear with His truth. Years ago, Dr. Ravi Zacharias, a converted Hindu to Christianity, spoke to

⁴ Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2003), 189.

the liberal American university about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. After his speech, a learned professor (read Babylonian) wasted no time accosting him, “Dr. Zacharias, your presentation about Christ claiming and proving to be the only way to salvation is wrong for people in India because you’re using ‘either-or’ logic. In the East we don’t use ‘either-or’ logic—that’s Western. In the East we use ‘both-and’ logic. So salvation is not either through Christ or nothing else, but both Christ and other ways.”

Ravi thought the exchange was amusing since he was from India and the educated Professor was not. But he let it go ... until lunch with the Professor and one of his colleagues. Throughout the lunch, the educator just couldn’t let his premise and critique go, and he used countless napkins to demonstrate that there are two types of logic, Western and Eastern.

After about thirty minutes of a one-sided, passionate “debate,” Dr. Zacharias said, “Professor, I think we can resolve this debate very quickly with just one question.”

“Okay, go ahead,” said the prof.

“Are you saying that when I’m in India, I must use *either* the ‘both-and’ logic and nothing else?” queried Zacharias.

A blank look registered on the Professor’s face.

Zacharias continued the clear discussion, “Are you saying that when I’m in India, I must use *either*,” and he then paused for effect ... “the ‘both-and logic’ or nothing else?”

Dr. Zacharias had not just disarmed a Babylonian. He demonstrated logically how Christ could actually be the only Savior of the world, for the world is full of either-or logic if a person is honest.

To be clear and quick like this will probably call for a little study, yet it will be worth it when the time for talking comes. Yes, that means you’ll probably need to do a little reading in order to how to best guide a wide variety of non-believers to consider the reasonable and logical nature of Christianity. Yes, it means you should always speak with humility and give God the praise for what is accomplished. This is what Daniel did so well:

³⁰ “But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

Daniel. What a class act. Let’s emulate him.