

God gave Daniel favour

- *God raises up some unexpected help for the faithful Daniel*

God gave Daniel favour. It is something God can easily do. When his people are threatened with extermination or with terrible threats God can raise up someone who is our protector and help. At the time of Israel's birth as a nation, Pharaoh was wanting all Israelite baby boys to be killed. But God gave his people some bold and courageous women to help them, midwives who 'feared God' ^{Exodus 1:17}. God can give us people who favour us. After Daniel had shown such faithfulness to God, he received unexpected help from the man who supervised their welfare. At the end of the ten days Daniel and his friends looked better and healthier than anyone else in the royal company of wise men ^{Daniel 1:15}. From that point on they could live on the diet of their own choice ^{Daniel 1:216}. They were given freedom to be faithful to their conscience and to God's law, despite the pressures of Babylonian life around them. It was a lesson that would be needed by future generations of Israelites living under Babylonians and Persians and Greeks and Romans.

^{Exodus} 1:17

^{Daniel} 1:15

^{Daniel} 1:216

Daniel's special ministry

- *To give revelations to Israel that would encourage them and sustain them through centuries of pagan domination*

Daniel's special ministry was to give revelations to Israel that would encourage them and sustain them through centuries of pagan domination. He would be given revelations concerning four great empires under which Israel had to survive before Israel's promised 'Son of David', the Messiah, would come. So Daniel himself had to prove in his own experience how God could sustain and protect one of his people even when placed under the very close supervision of so mighty an emperor as Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel's policy was the right one. He resolved not to become a pagan Babylonian. He combined decisiveness with courtesy. And he expected God to be working on his behalf.

Daniel combined worldly skill with spiritual skill

- *When God is using someone to advance his kingdom He gives him the education that he needs*

Daniel combined worldly skill with spiritual skill. This is one of the secrets of survival in pagan days. God gave Daniel and his friends knowledge and understanding in all kinds of literature. Daniel was a highly educated person. He was as well informed in the scholarship of the day as any Babylonian, just as Moses was 'educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians' ^{Acts 7:22}.

^{Acts} 7:22

Education is not everything. When God sends spiritual revival he often bypasses the highly educated. 'You have hidden these things from those who are so wise and clever' ^{Matthew 11:25}. Yet, on the other hand, when God is using someone to advance his kingdom he gives him the education that he needs. Nebuchadnezzar did not think he was training a servant of God when he gave Daniel a Babylonian education. Nebuchadnezzar thought he was simply training a future civil servant for his empire.

^{Matthew} 11:25

- *Spiritual gifts*
- *Jesus has all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge*

But Daniel's skill was not simply a matter of education. God gave him spiritual gifts as well. Daniel *could also understand every kind of vision and dream*. The Babylonians were famous for their wisdom and their supposed insight into the future by supernatural means. But Daniel's insight into the future was far better than anything the Babylonians could provide. This is a very important principle. Jesus has all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. When God is powerfully at work he reaches out to the ignorant and the foolish, but they are not to stay ignorant and foolish for ever!

God gave his people a place of eminence even in the midst of pagan wickedness

• Sometimes persecution and oppression help us

• Daniel's approach - loyalty to God, expectation of His help and attention to his skills - was used by God to ensure his survival as a servant of God for a long time

• Yet he was willing to lose his career at any point rather than be unfaithful to God

God gave his people a place of eminence even in the midst of pagan wickedness. At the end of the time of special training for Daniel they were presented to Nebuchadnezzar ¹, and Nebuchadnezzar found that these four Israelite young people were vastly more capable people than anyone else at the royal court ². *He found them ten times better than any of the magicians and enchanters throughout his entire kingdom.*

This is the way God's people are to survive and flourish in days of adversity. Adversity will not do us any harm. The worst that the pagan authorities can do to us will only help us! God has strange ways of working. Sometimes persecution and oppression help us. We should never be very bothered if we find ourselves in some situation which will bring out the very best in us. It is part of our training.

The last verse of the chapter makes the point that Daniel's policy of loyalty to God, courtesy to the reigning authorities, expectation of God's help, and attention to his skills and abilities enables him to survive through many decades of work within the Babylonian government. *Daniel continued to the first year of Cyrus the king.* ¹ This does not mean that Daniel died in Cyrus's first year (which would contradict 10:1). It simply means that Daniel continued throughout the Babylonian empire until the days of the time of the Persian empire. The first year of the first king of Persia (Cyrus) was 539 **BC**. Daniel survived for over sixty years as a member of Nebuchadnezzar's court. Verse 21 is the writer's way of saying that Daniel continued to hold high office through the reigns of the Babylonian kings, and even to the time of the first Persian king. The point is that Daniel's approach was used by God to ensure his survival as a servant of God for a long time.

Daniel's faithfulness to God led to his being raised to a position of very high eminence. However, we must remember that he was not faithful **only** to gain a position of high eminence, and he was willing to lose his career at any point. He was ready to be thrown into a fiery furnace, rather than be unfaithful to God ¹. He was ready and willing to be thrown into a den of lions rather than cease to worship the God of Israel publicly and openly ². Faithfulness to God will lead to the rewards of God, but it may only be a matter of eminence in the kingdom of God and not eminence in society. Yet who knows what might come to us if we are faithful?

¹ 1:18-19a
² 1:19b

¹ 1:21

¹ Daniel 3
² Daniel 6



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