

- *The deceitful magicians sentenced to death*

- *Daniel asks for time to seek an interpretation*

Daniel had a spiritual gift

- *Appropriate for the circumstances*

- *God is sovereign in the giving gifts – and from time to time seems to like to use odd characters*

Daniel needed to pray

- *He still needed to seek God for the answer to his need, and the king's need*

Daniel needed to give praise

- *Daniel is not in a hurry to rush to tell the king what he has found out*

- *God's wisdom as the Lord of history*

- *God's sovereignty*

Nebuchadnezzar was furious at the obvious deceitfulness of his magicians and announced the death penalty for all of them ^{☐1}. Daniel and his friends were included in the threat ^{☐2}. However, Daniel, following his usual policy of calmness, courtesy and faith, found out what was happening ^{☐3}, and asked the king for time to seek an interpretation for the king's dream ^{☐4}.

Daniel had a spiritual gift. It was an unusual gift. He had great spiritual understanding concerning anything that involved dreams and visions ^{☐1}. It was a gift that was appropriate for the circumstances he was in. The Babylonians admired this kind of knowledge; so God gave Daniel what was needed for the situation he was in.

Every Christian has a spiritual gift. 'Having gifts that differ, let us use them'. Some of the gifts are dramatic; some are more ordinary. Occasionally God gives someone a spiritual gift that seems odd or unusual. But we must not reject a man of God, simply because his gift is unusual and different. God is very sovereign in giving gifts of the Spirit, and from time to time seems to like to use odd characters. 'Sensible' people need to be careful not to reject what strikes them as peculiar.

Daniel needed to pray. Daniel's gift could not be 'switched on' at will. What we mean when we say that Daniel had a gift is simply that God had a habit of using Daniel along these lines. It did not mean that Daniel controlled the abilities he had. He still needed to seek God for the answer to his need, and the king's need. And he knew that it would take time to seek God in the way that he wished. He and his friends gave themselves to prayer, asking God to have mercy on them and give them the supernatural knowledge that they needed ^{☐1}. After a while the answer was given.

Daniel needed to give praise. Soon God answered Daniel's prayer. *Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night* ^{☐1}. Immediately Daniel wanted to thank God. He had spent time in request. Now he spends corresponding time in praise and thanksgiving. He wrote a psalm which we have recorded for us in Daniel 2:20–23. Daniel is not in a hurry to rush to tell the king what he has found out. Even though Daniel's life is at stake, he takes the time to compose a psalm in praise of God. Arioch is in a hurry (as we see in verse 25, Arioch quickly brought Daniel into the king's presence) but not Daniel.

He praises God's wisdom as the Lord of history. Daniel already knows about the future kingdom that will come along in the history of the world. He knows what he is about to tell Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel can see that God is ruling the empires with amazing wisdom that will astonish us all as history unfolds.

He praises God's sovereignty. Daniel knows how some kings will be put down, and others will be brought to prominence and given success.

☐1 2:12

☐2 2:13

☐3 2:14–15

☐4 2:16

☐1 see 1:17

☐1 2:17-18

☐1 2:19

• God as the giver of knowledge

He praises God as the giver of knowledge. What the wise men of Babylon have not been able to do, Daniel has done. He can tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream.

• God as the one who answers prayer

He praises God as the one who answers prayer. 'You have made known to me what we asked of you.' ¹

Daniel gives glory to God

• Spiritual gifts cannot be 'switched on' at will

Daniel gives glory to God. Daniel speaks to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard ¹, and Arioch goes to Nebuchadnezzar. 'I have found a man ... who can make the interpretation known', he says ². So Daniel is brought to the king. 'Are you able to tell me the dream...?' asks the king ³. Daniel says 'No!' 'It is a mystery', he says. 'Neither wise men, conjurers, magicians, nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. However, there is a God... who reveals mysteries...' ⁴ Daniel chooses his words carefully. He is avoiding talking as if he had some kind of supernatural power that could be switched on when wanted. Again we learn: spiritual gifts cannot be 'switched on' at will. What we mean when we say that we have gifts of the Holy Spirit is that God has a habit of using us along certain channels. He has made us in a certain way; he has given gifts to us of a particular kind. Now he uses us along these lines. But it does not mean that we control our gifts totally. God in his sovereignty can withhold knowledge as well as give it. He can withhold a miracle as well as give one. Daniel does not want Nebuchadnezzar to think that Daniel personally has done something for the king. What has happened has to be carefully ascribed to God. 'Are you able to make known to me the dream...?' 'No! However, there is a God in heaven...'

• What has happened has to be carefully ascribed to God

• Not because of Daniel's wisdom

Daniel can tell the king exactly what took place. 'While you were on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future' ¹. Daniel knows even what was happening in the king's thinking. But Daniel wants it clearly understood. 'This mystery has not been revealed to me because of any wisdom residing in me, more than any other living man...' ².

• Lessons for Christians from Daniel on how to use our Spiritual Gifts

All Christians have gifts of the Spirit but we should learn a few things from Daniel. We cannot turn on blessings at the press of a button. We need to seek God in addition to stirring up the gifts that are within us. We need to realize that our giftedness is neither in our control nor is it for our own glory. Who sees anything different in you? What do you have, that you did not receive? Why do you boast as if it were not a gift?

¹ 2:23

¹ 2:24

² 2:25

³ 2:26

⁴ 2:27-8

¹ 2:29

² 2:30



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