

Daniel 2:46-49
Faith's Rewards

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him.

47 The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret."

48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon.

49 Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

Have you ever considered how pervasive the argument that we have to leave our religion out of our public life is? We are told again and again, that in the workplace, in politics, in school, in social life, we must "***leave our religion at the door.***" One of the reasons we are told we must do this, is that if we don't we will never get ahead. We will miss out on many temporal benefits. For instance, I remember being specifically told by my manager at a company I worked for in Washington D.C. that if I continued to be open about my faith, that my career with them was going nowhere.

You are told again and again, you must compromise. "***Oh everyone around here uses that kind of language***", "***We expect our people to work hard and play hard too***" "***Everyone has to work Sundays***" "***Everyone fudges the numbers a little***" "***you have to stretch the truth a little to make the sale***" "***You want to be a team player, don't you?***" And so it goes, compromise here, compromise there, until a man or a woman who professes to be a believer in Jesus Christ and to love Him looks, sounds, and acts, exactly like their unbelieving co-workers.

Although we may feel like the first people to go through that, the pressure to compromise your faith in the public square is nothing new. In fact, I'm sure that as soon as Daniel and his friends got to Babylon, they were immediately under pressure to put aside their allegiance to Yahweh, and "fit in" to the corporate culture of the Babylonian wise men. Adding to the pressure to do that was the fact that the vast majority of their fellow exiles had done exactly the same thing.

Even the exiled king of Judah had gone along to get along. He hadn't raised so much as a peep about eating delicacies dedicated to the false gods of Babylon.

But from the start, Daniel and his friends had determined not to do that. Daniel we read in chapter 1, determined not to defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, and contrary to what we are told again and again would happen, this determination to remain true to their faith even in public had not been their undoing. Quite the opposite, I hope you realize that had Daniel and his companions followed the worldly wise advice and "left their religion at the door" the book would have ended in Chapter 2 with their deaths along with all the other wise men.

In fact, it was because of their very open faith in God and God's faithfulness to them, that they were not destroyed, but advanced beyond all expectation, going from junior wise men to rulers of Babylon in one leap. In that respect Daniel's story is very similar to that of Joseph who went from being a forgotten prisoner, to the second most important man in Egypt because he too never compromised his faith and was consequently the only one granted the ability to rightly interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

Daniel's trust in God is more than vindicated, and that has uniformly been my own experience. Contrary to what the world expects, it is the men and women who will not compromise their faith who are the ones who are blessed, while those who do sow the seeds of compromise, end up reaping a very bitter harvest. But more about that in a moment, first I want to make a few observations about the text.

After Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar what his dream was, and then tells him what it means, Nebuchadnezzar falls to the ground before him, which in and of itself is amazing. Here is the most powerful ruler on earth falling down before one of his captives. Nebuchadnezzar does this because he is simply awe-struck by this display of the power of God.

I mean think about it, Nebuchadnezzar could command armies, break down city walls and have them built up again, but with all that power he had no ability to know the thoughts of men's hearts, so with all those men surrounding him, he could never know who he could really trust. Also, with all his power, he could tell nothing about the future, he went to bed every evening with no knowledge of what the next day would bring. There wasn't a king on earth who could – who could know those kinds of things but God?

That is why when he sees the display of such power, he falls down before the messenger. Now here the question comes up, is Nebuchadnezzar worshipping Daniel or is he doing something more like Alexander the Great who when he reached Jerusalem bowed down to the earth before the High Priest of God and explained to his aides, ***“I do not worship the High Priest, but the God with whose high-priesthood he has been honored.”*** Commentators are split on that issue, I tend to think that Nebuchadnezzar really did mean to offer worship to Daniel, but that Daniel reacted to that attempt at worship in the same kind of way Peter did in Acts 10:26 when Cornelius fell down before him – you remember he said to him ***“Stand up; I myself am also a man.”*** On three occasions in this chapter, Daniel has made it clear that God, not Daniel, had revealed this to King, he even pointed out to him ***“But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living”*** and I believe that Daniel once again said that he was not the one worthy of worship and offerings but that he was only the messenger of the God of Heaven.

In support of that idea that there was a comment by Daniel to that effect that wasn't written down, I'd refer you to verse 47 which says the king *anahed* Daniel that is “Replied” or “Answered” Daniel, and you'll notice that after that the Kings praise is given to God, not to Daniel.

Nebuchadnezzar's praise of God in verse 47 is instructive too. Now clearly Nebuchadnezzar didn't become a believer at this point. The very next chapter is all about an image he raises up for worship, also he is clearly still a polytheist, he calls God the “God of gods.” In other words, your God Daniel is clearly the most powerful God, but I'm still going to believe in my Babylonian gods as well.

He also calls Him the Lord of kings, in short he's acknowledging ***“Your God rules.”*** Clearly Nebuchadnezzar believes that God is sovereign over all things including future events. This God that Daniel worshipped was the God who exercises dominion over the whole world, and determines what will come to pass. That is why he can tell that his plan is going to happen with certainty, because he is the one who has decreed it.

Just as an aside, I hope that everyone here is at least as convinced of the sovereignty of God as this pagan king. I hope that you see that the only way Daniel could predict with any certainty this succession of kingdoms, followed ultimately by the coming of Jesus and the sure establishment of his

Christ's never-ending kingdom, is because God had decreed it should come to pass. If there really was such a thing as chance, then Babylon could have beaten Persia and not vice versa. Alexander and the Romans instead of preserving the Jews could have decimated them, and made it impossible in a host of different ways for Jesus to be born at the appointed time. All of these things came to pass not because God *foresaw them*, but because he *foreordained them*.

In any event, while Nebuchadnezzar no longer seeks to worship Daniel, he does promote him to the highest levels. He becomes ruler over the central province of the empire, and the head of all the King's wisemen. Which is appropriate, considering he was the only one who actually had been granted the power to know what was going to come to pass. One can speculate, that Nebuchadnezzar realizing that all of his other wisemen were ultimately as blind as he was regarding the future, hoped that Daniel would retrain them. One hopes that Daniel changed the curriculum from the useless astrological texts of the Chaldees to a study of wisdom and prophecy based on the Inspired Word of God. Imagine how much more these "wise men" would have learned from Proverbs or Isaiah than the garbage they'd be studying.

Rodney Stortz believed that it was because of this change in wise men curricula that hundreds of years later, *wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."* And who knows but he that he is right.

Daniel in turn doesn't forget his friends who prayed with and for him, but has them promoted as well. Together, they will be able to do much to improve the lot of their people in the empire.

Let me leave you with one great application of this text:

NEVER Compromise your Faith:

1) Let me give you the reason for that – *positively and negatively*.

Positively - because the promises of God are sure. Daniel didn't compromise even though he was submerged in a pagan culture, because like Abraham, he believed the promises of God. Now that included the promise that someday the redeemer would come out of Zion. Daniel knew that God had would someday many years hence send the deliverer, the Messiah into the world. So he was able to walk by faith and not by sight.

That was important, because as he looked at his circumstances alone, he might be tempted to conclude that it was all over for the visible church. Jerusalem had been sacked, the people of God hauled off to exile, and there seemed no end to the power of Babylon. Had he walked by sight he would have compromised. But Daniel who was familiar with the word of God, knew from the book of Isaiah which had been written long before this, that:

- 1) the exile would come
- 2) Babylon would be destroyed by Persia, the exile would end, and Cyrus would pay to rebuild Jerusalem (Isa. 44:28)
- 3) The deliverer, the Suffering servant Jesus would be born and would save his people from their sins.

Throughout his lifetime, the things he knew from the word were confirmed in prophecy after prophecy and event after event. That is why Daniel had no hesitation saying that ***“the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”*** Because Daniel knew that the Kingdom of Christ would be established and would someday fill the earth. Again like Abraham, he saw the day of Christ and he rejoiced. As a result he was able to stand firm, because he was standing on that same rock that he saw filling the earth.

Negatively – because compromise has never lead to anything good.

The tendency to compromise their faith, to allow for false gods and abominable practices is what had put the people of God into exile in the first place. Had Daniel done it in a vain pursuit of worldly riches, he would have come to nothing. I myself have seen Christians do that, and they end up sacrificing precious things in pursuit of dust and fleeting glory. They sacrifice a clear conscience, they sacrifice the ability to be light and salt amongst a lost and dying world. In order to “just fit in to the dog pack” they sacrifice the ability to stand head and shoulders above it. You’d be surprised at how much more even pagans will respect a man or woman of consistent faith and virtue over a compromiser. They may think you’re good fun, but they’ll seldom respect someone they know to be just as compromised as themselves.

So if you are already compromising, stop! And if you haven’t yet gotten started, don’t! Kids this particularly applies to you...

Now you may think, well I’ll lose some cool stuff if I stand for Christ. Daniel lost the chance at eating the kings delicacies for many years for instance, and ate common fare instead. And I won’t lie, men and women have lost jobs, and preferment for Christ. Many a minister has lost his position because he would not compromise. But remember, there you are just sacrificing the world’s treasure for an eternal treasure. ***You are giving up what you cannot keep, for something that you can never lose.***

As Spurgeon put it: *“You may lose a great deal for Christ, but you will never lose anything by Christ. You may lose for the present time, but you will gain for eternity. The loss is transient, but the gain is everlasting. You will be a gainer by Christ, even if you have to go to heaven by the way of persecution, poverty, and slander. Never mind the way. The end will make full amends. The treasures of Egypt are mere dross compared with the riches of endless bliss.”*