

# “THE LIFE GOD BLESSES”

## Daniel 1:14-21

There is little doubt that Daniel and his friends’ exploits were fueled by faith. Their risky faith carried with it their own potential deaths along with Ashpenaz and his steward. However, these young Jews had already determined that they would remain faithful to God no matter what. God honored their commitment and convictions in an amazing way! <sup>1</sup>

I think we should pause at this point and think about what Daniel and his three friends were risking. . .

- **They risked angering the king, who wouldn’t appreciate hearing that some teenage kid from Israel didn’t want to eat at his table.**
- **They risked spoiling their own chances for advancement. You can’t climb the ladder while you’re rocking the boat. If this blows up in Daniel’s face, he can kiss his future goodbye.**

The Babylonians could change his diet, his location, his education, his language, even his name—but they couldn’t change his heart. Why? It belonged to God. When your heart truly belongs to God, you can go anywhere and face any situation and you’ll be okay. You can even live in Babylon and do just fine because your body is in Babylon but your heart is in heaven. So the question for all of us to answer is this—**Where is your heart?** Does it truly belong to God? Or is your heart fixed on the things of this earth?

This story comes to an end on a very positive note. We discover in these verses that God always honors those who honor him. In this case the reward

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 12.

came very quickly. However, in many cases the blessing and reward comes later. Sometimes it doesn't come until we get to heaven.

**1 Samuel 2:26–30**... Now the boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor both with the LORD and with men. **27** Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Did I *not* indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt *in bondage* to Pharaoh’s house? **28** ‘Did I *not* choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before Me; and did I *not* give to the house of your father all the fire *offerings* of the sons of Israel? **29** ‘Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded *in My dwelling*, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?’ **30** “Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, ‘I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever’; but *now the LORD declares, ‘Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.*

**John 12:26**... “If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”

**1 Samuel 16:7**... But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God *sees* not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

**2 Chronicles 16:9**... “For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His....”

Our call is to be resistant to compromise, to be consistent in our walk with the Lord, and to be persistent until we see Jesus. Trust me. If we honor the Lord, He will honor us!

**There is a blessing reserved for the bold that the timid never experience.**

I want you to see how. . .

### **God Blessed Them Physically**

**Daniel 1:14–16... So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king’s choice food. 16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.**

Daniel and his friends had honored God, and God honored them by giving them favor with the guard and healthy bodies. It appears that they continued eating vegetables and drinking water for the three-year training period.

### **God Blessed Them SPIRITUALLY**

**Daniel 1:17, 20... As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of* literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all *kinds of* visions and dreams. 20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* conjurers who *were* in all his realm.**

For the third time “God gives” (2, 9). God gives the four youths “*knowledge and understanding in every kind of literature and wisdom.*” Look at verse 20—Nebuchadnezzar found these four young men to be ten times better than *all the magicians and mediums in his entire kingdom.* The sovereign God honored them by giving them the ability to see things from God’s perspective, to understand the times, and to know what to do!

God gave Daniel the supernatural ability to understand all kinds of visions and dreams (17). This gift from God would prove extremely valuable in chapter 2 and beyond (cf. 4:4–27; 5:11–31; 7:1–8:27; 9:20–27; 10:1–12:13).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 13.

Daniel was gifted as a seer, or prophet. As such, he was to serve as the very vehicle of God's divine revelations. This statement becomes the backdrop for the rest of Daniel's prophecy. (John MacArthur, *An Uncompromising Life*, 49)

## **God Blessed Them Professionally**

**Daniel 1:18–21... Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. 20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm. 21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.**

None of the other young Jewish refugees and none of the king's established pool of magicians and conjurers could compare with the wisdom, knowledge, and ability of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah. They were so impressive that Nebuchadnezzar gave them key administrative posts. He was confident they would serve and represent him well.<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur stated:

**"Daniel served in his influential position for 70+ years. His integrity and uncompromising character had far-reaching results, for when I see the wise men coming from the East, I think of the impact Daniel's theology must have had upon the Chaldeans' astrology. God gave him the influence that I believe led to the decree of Cyrus to send the people back to their land ... influence that led to the rebuilding of the wall under Nehemiah and to the reestablishing of the nation of Israel ... influence that eventually led the wise men to come to crown the King who was born in Bethlehem. Daniel was behind the scenes of the history of the Messiah as well as the Messiah's people. Daniel had unlimited influence for through his prophecy he brings homage to the one who is the "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16) who reigns forever."** (John MacArthur, *An Uncompromising Life*, 50)

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 14.

**Let's close out our discussion of Daniel 1 by asking and answering a couple of questions. . .**

### **How Does This Text Point to Christ?**

Daniel and his three companions remained faithful to their true identity, obeyed God, and were a shining testimony and witness both to God's providence and to his grace. He sent them on a missionary journey, making them leave all that was familiar so that they might bear a faithful and true witness to kings and nations in foreign lands.

These four young men typify another Hebrew who will arrive 600 years later who was also sent to a foreign land to bear witness to the one true God—a Jew by the name of Jesus. Like Daniel and his friends. . .

- **The Son of God would leave his home and willingly embrace a sinful world without defiling himself (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:21–25).**
- **He “would find favor with God and man (Luke 2:40,52).**
- **When He was still a child, his teachers ‘were amazed at his understanding and his answers’ (Luke 2:47).”**
- **Jesus is the embodiment of the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:30).<sup>4</sup>**

### **What Are The Lessons For Today?**

***#1 Indoctrination by the secular culture is a present danger.***

We are bombarded with anti-God input from the media every day. Make no mistake. There is a battle for your mind, a battle being fought every day. Some of us are losing the battle because we don't even know there is a battle going on.

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel L. Akin, [\*Exalting Jesus in Daniel\*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 15.

**#2 *We must decide in advance that we will not compromise.***

Study the Word. Know what is right and what is wrong. Decide *ahead of time* what your convictions are. Do the right thing!

When they taught him the Babylonian language, he learned it just like everyone else. When they taught him a new culture, he did not rebel. And when they changed his name, he apparently did not speak out.

But when they said, "You have to eat the king's food and drink the king's wine," he said, "I'm sorry. I can't do that." And he didn't.

**#3 *God honors those who honor Him.***

I don't want you to miss what God did for Daniel and his friends...

*God protected Daniel* (when he proposed the test)

*God prospered Daniel* (during the test and afterward)

*God promoted Daniel* (in the eyes of the King)

In 1873, P.P. Bliss wrote a gospel song about this story that became very popular but has in our day become virtually unknown. It is called "*Dare to be a Daniel.*"

Standing by a purpose true,

Heeding God's command,

Honor them, the faithful few!

All hail to Daniel's band!

Many mighty men are lost

Daring not to stand,

Who for God had been a host

By joining Daniel's band.

Many giants, great and tall

Stalking through the land,

Headlong to the earth would fall,

If met by Daniel's band.

Hold the gospel banner high!

On to victory grand!

Satan and his hosts defy,

And shout for Daniel's band.

Refrain:

Dare to be a Daniel,

Dare to stand alone!

Dare to have a purpose firm!

Dare to make it known.