Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Forgotten Dream and the Unforgettable Daniel
Scripture: Daniel 2:1-30
Code: 27-06

We're going to be looking tonight at the Daniel 2. What a wonderful time we've had in the first chapter and now we're going on to look at this wonderful second chapter. And by the way, it's a rather lengthy chapter, to put it mildly. It has 49 verses, and so I'll let you know that we'll not cover the whole chapter tonight. I'm sure you're quite aware of that anyway.

But we're going to begin to look at chapter 2 and we'll get as far as we can in unfolding this tremendous message. We've entitled this The Forgotten Dream: The Unforgettable Daniel.

George Washington once said, "Few men have the virtue to withstand the highest bidder." He was right. Most people have a price. A truly uncompromising man is a very rare commodity. But that is exactly the kind of a man and the kind of a woman that God looks for to do his work. When it comes to very special tasks, when it comes to very great privileges and opportunities, God wants uncompromising people with character.

God wants choice servants for choice ministries.

Daniel was such a person. Daniel was a man who wouldn't compromise. Daniel was a man who had amazing character qualities. And God uses Daniel as the vehicle through which he reveals the unfolding of the redemptive plan of the history of the world. Now that's a monumental assignment. To be the vehicle through which God gives a prophetic perspective on all of human history. What a calling and what a privilege.

In chapter 2 we begin to see that calling unfolding. Chapter 1 has been preparatory really. In chapter 1 we have simply seen the circumstances that set Daniel in the right place. We have seen something of the quality and the character of the man that equips him to be God's very special man in this particular assignment.

We have learned that Daniel has set an uncompromising standard for his own life. We have learned that Daniel had an amazing commitment to virtuous and righteous character. And because of that, he becomes God's chosen man.

Now looking back at Daniel 1:17, we draw upon a very important point. It says it's for these four youths - and that would be Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, his three friends. But as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. And listen to this: and

Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Now that little statement sets Daniel apart from the rest. Daniel was given the unique capacity to reveal visions and dreams. In other words, Daniel was to be the agency of God's revelation. Daniel was to be the instrument through whom God would speak. This amazing teenager, in fact, in a way beyond any other Old Testament saint is given the most complete, the most comprehensive and the most extensive, prophetic picture of human history ever given in the Old Testament.

An amazing prophesy that begins to unfold in verse 31 of chapter 2. And given this not only because he was gifted - now mark it, folks - not only because he was gifted but because he was of such character that he would receive God's highest service.

His life was useable. As I mentioned earlier in my prayer, a Scripture in 2 Timothy 2 that tells us that we are to be purged in order that we might be vessels fit for the master's use. Such a vessel was Daniel. Daniel was a man who influenced the world. This kind of uncompromising virtue, this kind of amazing character, put him in a position to influence the whole world. And that is precisely what he did and what he still does through his book, his prophecy.

The whole marvelous plan of God for the nations, the Gentiles, the whole marvelous plan of God for Israel is very special people is all unfolded to this wonderful man, Daniel.

Now as we divide chapter 2, verses 1 through 30, which will be the text we're focus on tonight - I don't know we'll get through all of it. It's narrative and we'll move pretty fast. But as we divide the first 30 verses, they divide, obviously, into two very simple thoughts. First is the forgotten dream and secondly the unforgettable Daniel.

The first 13 verses - the Forgotten Dream - verses 14-30, the Unforgettable Daniel. And what we have here is this - and mark it, folks - we have really two things going on. One is a divine commission to be the vehicle of God's revelation. And the other is a crisis that's going on. This is God's man to reveal a message in the midst of a crisis. So he is not only a messenger of God, he is a man in the midst of a crisis. And it takes the kind of uncompromising character that Daniel had to withstand the crisis that he's going to get involved in.

Now let's look at the first 13 verses, the Forgotten Dream. First, we're going to see the dream then we're going to see the dilemma then we'll move to the deficiency and finally the decree. The dream, the dilemma, the deficiency and the decree.

First of all, look at the dream in the first three verses. "And in the second year of the rain of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams" - notice it's plural - "and his spirit was troubled and his sleep went from him." Now we'll stop there for a moment. Nebuchadnezzar is currently the

kind of Babylon. He is the king of Babylon because he has succeeded his father Nabopolasser. Nabopolasser, before he was the king of the whole Babylonian empire and the whole area of the world around that place and that time, before that was simply sort of a minor ruler in an area known as Babylonia, which was a southern province of the great Assyrian Empire.

But Nabopolasser, while he was in that southern Babylonian area, part of the great empire of Assyria, decided that he would rise to a place of total ruler ship. And so he put together an army and he began to conquer. And before he was done, Nabopolasser had in effect taken that whole part of the known world. He had dealt with all of the peoples that were involved.

His son, Nebuchadnezzar, had become a deportation of the Jews from the land of Israel, particularly the southern part, Judah. In that first deportation came the young man, one of whom was Daniel. There would be two more deportations, finally making that land nothing more than a wasteland as far as the people of Israel were concerned. He would remove for all intents and purposes the vast majority of the population.

Now Nabopolasser died in the midst of all of this and he was succeeded on the throne by his son Nebuchadnezzar. Without question, Nebuchadnezzar gets more ink in the Old Testament than any other pagan king. He's discussed more than any other monarch in the pagan world. He was a masterful man in many areas. He was a genius, he was an educator, he was involved in academics, he was an architect, he was a great military mind and on and on and on. Amazing man.

Now it is Nebuchadnezzar that God selects to be the instrumentation of this dream. Let's look at the historical note at the beginning of verse 1. "In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar" - stop there for a minute. Lots of people get confused about this because they know that Daniel was brought to Babylon to undergo three years of training. Tell us that in verse 5 of chapter 1. They were to be there for three years. And the training ended at the end of chapter 1.

Now if Nebuchadnezzar brought Daniel over there and he was there for three years, how could this be the second reign of Nebuchadnezzar? Would have to be at least the third year. Well, the answer we gave you when we discussed chapter 1, verse 1, and that is this: in the book of Daniel, you do not have Jewish reckoning, you have Babylonian reckoning. And it comes up several times so we might as well get used to it at this point.

The first year of any monarch in the Babylonian system was not considered a part of his reign. It was his year of accession. And when they dated their kings, they dated them from the first full year to the last, any portion of which they were still on the throne. So Nabopolasser dying in Babylonian reckoning, the rest of the year would still have been his year. And officially even though Nebuchadnezzar had come to the throne, it was called his accession to the throne and they never started counting until the beginning of his first full year.

So really if you want to look at it from the Jewish perspective, this would've been the third year and would've fit together with the three-year period of training. So there really isn't any problem with that at all but that's just a historical note.

I really believe that the events of chapter 2 - and this is another footnote historically - happened immediately after chapter 1. Some people think there was a long period of time, some people even think that the things that happened in chapter 2 really believe in chapter 1 during the three-year time of training. I don't feel that way. I feel that when you come to chapter 1, verse 17, after they've had all their training, it says, "God gave them knowledge and skill and all learning and wisdom and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."

Now at the end of the days if the king had said he should bring them in, and now you're at the end of their days. Just prior to the end of their days, Daniel is given this gift somewhere. We don't know the exact timeframe. But he's given this gift. Their training then ends and they are placed in the king's court. Now I think they would still be considered as apprentices as wise men but they've been trained to be wise men in the Babylonian court. They're still on an apprentice level, and I believe immediately God moves to establish Daniel's capability in the vision and the dreams.

In other words, Daniel 1:17 is illustrated in chapter 2. And since it says the second year of Nebuchadnezzar, it must've been a very immediate thing. It is possible, and I would grant this, that it actually did occur toward the end of the three-year training. But if we can grant to Daniel any crinology at all, it seems as though the training ends at chapter 1, they meet the king at the end of the chapter, the king puts them up to stand before him, as it says in verse 19, and then it makes the note in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar, which would be that same year which they finished their training, this particular dream was dreamed.

Now let's look at another thought. Since when does God reveal great historical prophetic truth through pagan kings? Since when? That's really a new thing. And why a pagan? Well, let me tell you why. Remember this: Israel at this time was morally and spiritually just about as bad off as the Chaldeans or the Babylonians. God frankly had little to chose between. Only if you want to really look at it in a Biblical perspective, Israel was worse-off than the Chaldeans because Israel had become apostate. It is one thing not to know the truth, it is something to know it and forsake it.

And so Israel had come to a place where God was finished dealing with them for the time. God's people had degenerated into gross idolatry. Judgment was falling on them in the Babylonian captivity. What an amazing rebuke it was to God's people for God to chose the single greatest revelation of the history of redemption that he ever gave and to have a vehicle a pagan king. What a rebuttal and rebuke to the sins of Israel.

Furthermore, the captivity of Israel began a period of history known as the times of the Gentiles. Luke 21:24 calls it that. So it is fitting that as the times of the Gentiles begin the outline of that period prophetically is given through a Gentile king. But I must hasten to add that the plan was not just for the Gentiles and the prophecy is not just about the Gentiles, that's why Daniel's also included in this situation because God had not forsaken Israel either.

Now back to verse 1 - so Nebuchadnezzar, this king dreamed dreams. Now how did this happen? Well, go down to verse 29 and it kind of gives you a footnote of it. Verse 28 ends with the statement that he as dreaming on his bed. And then verse 29 says, "As for the O King thy thoughts came into they mind upon my bed." This is his thought right here: "What should come to pass hereafter?" That was basically his thought.

He was lying in bed one night and he was thinking to himself, you know, I'm not going to live forever. I wonder what's going to happen when I die. I wonder what's going to take place in the history of the world. Cataclysmic things have taken place - the Assyrians have been wiped out, the Egyptians have been decimated, never to rise from their own ashes. The land of Israel had been completely taken into captivity and never returned. Judah was now in the process of its dissolution.

And Nebuchadnezzar is saying to himself from the vantage point of ruling the world as he knew it, "I wonder what'll happen to this whole thing as I die." And as he went to sleep, God gave him the answer and he dreamed dreams.

Now notice it's plural there in verse 1. He had several dreams. And apparently these dreams were so shocking and they were so deeply alarming that he was unable to sleep and his sleep went from him. He couldn't sleep. The dream was so devastating. Now I believe he had several dreams because of the plural but I think it was one particular dream that gave him the greatest amount of anxiety.

The world troubled there means a very deep disturbance. Now ordinary dreams would trouble us but not in the intensity that it's meant here. This was really, really deep trouble of his soul. And I believe that was because God had ordained this dream. And you say, "Well isn't it a little strange for God to reveal things in dreams?" I mean didn't he usually just write the Bible? Didn't just tell somebody in their heart and their mind while they're awake? I mean this dream sounds like kind of a cultic thing.

But it's not abnormal at all for God to do that during periods of revelation. He did it a lot. In Numbers 12:6, the Lord said he would speak to Moses face to face whereas with others, such as prophets, in visions and dreams. In Genesis, Jacob saw a dream that promised him the land of Palestine. In a dream God appeared to Joseph. In a dream God spoke to a himelec. In a dream God appeared to Solomon. In a dream God spoke to Pharaoh and revealed the seven years of plenty and the subsequent seven years of famine. In a dream God spoke to one of the soldiers of the Midanites and

gave a vision for the encouragement for Gideon.

It was not abnormal at all for God to speak in dreams. Now I would say it's abnormal today if God has finished his revelation. So don't go to sleep at night hoping you'll get a revelation from God in your dream. I don't think God is in a business of revelations anymore since Hebrews 1 says He's spoken unto us finally in his last days through his son. I don't think there is any more revelation but in those days God chose to speak through dreams.

Now the king had this dream and it panicked him. And what was even worse, really amazing, he couldn't remember the dream. I think what he remember were some bits and pieces. I think he vaguely remembered some things that sort of efformaly swept through his brain but he couldn't grasp the dream again. And I believe that as much God gave him the dream so much that God remove it from his memory. Now you say, "Wait a minute. That makes no sense." I had enough trouble figuring out why God gave him a dream, now you say the same God that gave him a dream took it away from him? Well, yes essentially. I think God had a purpose for both and we'll see it as we go.

I think he remembered the terror of the dream. I think he remembered the fearfulness of the dream. But I believe the specifics somehow floated out of his mind and he couldn't recover the memory of it. Only the fear remained and the sleepless hours added to his anxiety and his fear. By the time the morning came he was a wreck because of a dream he couldn't even remember. And so he asked - verse 2: "Then the kind commanded to summon all the magicians, astrologers and the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said onto them, 'I have dreamed a dream and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.'"

Now he gets all the brain trust of the Babylonian empire and he pulls them all in. He appealed to the intellectuals because he couldn't figure out his dream and he was afraid. You know, he's not like, he's not unlike many people who look into the future and they find it very foreboding.

I was reading this week's IBM's latest publication on the future. And they have endeavored to consult with famous futurologists, scientists, fiction writers, all kinds of people who study the future and come up with a whole big picture of what the future is going to be like. Some of it is very fearful, very, very fearful. There isn't much to fear and Nebuchadnezzar knew that.

And so he calls for the brain trust of his nation. The terms here are kind of interesting. The magicians - there's two possibilities for this. Basically the term can refer to fortunetellers but sometimes we find it seemingly associated with people who are scholars. In one sense it would be more academic, in another sense it would be more occultic. For the kind of society of that it's very possible that they were engaged in both.

And then there are the astrologers. And those are the stargazers, those are the monthly prognosticators, those are the people who charter the course of the stars and determine destinies on the basis of how they arrange themselves like horoscopes do today. And then the sorcerers. The sorcerers are the spiritualists. They are the enchanters. They are the mediums. They are the ones that talk with the dead.

And then the Chaldeans. And the Chaldeans are the leading group because they do the talking. They, I suppose, were the wisest of the wise. By the way, originally, the Chaldeans were simply a group of people in southern Babylonia. They were simply a group of people who eventually, under Nabopolasser - that's where they came from, Nabopolasser being a Chaldean - conquered the whole thing and sold this one particular group of people rose to be the highest in the courts of Babylon. They were supposedly the wisest and most knowledgeable in all of the arts and science of Chaldea or Babylon.

And so everybody came together with all of the scholarship that was available, with all of the occultism that was available, with all the demonism that was available, with all the human wisdom that was available. He got all of the brain trust - the fortune tellers and the futurists and the palmists and the tea leave readers and the crystal gazers and the horoscope people just like we do today trying to get a hedge on tomorrow, trying to figure out what was going to happen. It's amazing that that's what our world does. Because we don't know God, whenever somebody in our society wants to know what's going to happen in the future, they pull all the brain trusts and try to figure it out.

Now they believe that dreams were very important in that day so they were very anxious to help the king in this matter. And when they saw no doubt how concerned he was, they were even more anxious. And let me add something that's I think very interesting.

He announces to them his problem. Verse 3 singularizes it: "I have dreamed a dream and my spirit was troubled to know the dream." Now he had a lot of dreams but only one the dreams really hit him. And he said I want to know that dream. Now let me tell you about these Chaldeans. They had a dream reading system. Are you ready for that.

They worked on this principle - and I think this is so fascinating. I got into reading this and it just was amazing to me. They worked on the principle that - now watch - and their sequels follow an empirical law, which given enough data can be established.

And so what they did was they kept records of all dreams. And they charted after a person had a dream the way their life went. And so they concluded a guy had this dream and his life went like this. A guy had a very similar dream and his life went like this. And they found out the similarities and said if you have a certain kind of dream, your life will go like this.

It wasn't a lot unlike what happens in the legal profession today. They base the current interpretation of the law on how it was interpreted in the past. I don't know if you've ever gone to an attorney's office and seen the volumes and volumes and volumes of books that give you all these law cases, all this stuff, data on what's gone on in the past. And when anybody wants to interpret the Constitution now, wants to interpret the law now, they go in there, they check all the pasts.

Well, believe it, the Chaldeans and all the sorcerers and all these people had manuals. They had massive libraries. We've even found their dream manuals in archaeological studies. And you could go to a dream manual and you could look up the elements of your dream and they would tell you what it meant.

Now of course it's a bunch of hocus-pocus because they really didn't know. But they had tried in their human ingenuity to devise a clear system. They had a very systematically arranged, easy referenced dream manual.

Now let me tell you something: there were so many of these books apparently and there was such a huge amount of material to follow that they needed some time. And we'll see a little later that the king wasn't about to give it to him.

These dream manuals apparently covered every eventuality possible and they had to spend time looking through to find out all of the little parts and pieces to put the guy's dream together. But the problem was this - I love this - he forgot the dream. That's their problem. They can do pretty good with their stuff, they can pull out their bag of tricks and pull their chicanery if they got a dream to work on.

But he tells them, "I don't know what the dream is. You tell me the dream and then interpret it for me." And that leads us from the dream to the dilemma, point 2. That's a little tough. Verse 4: "Then spoke to Chaldeans, to the king in Aramaic." And this is kind of an interesting note: from here on through chapter 7:28, the whole section is written in Aramaic. Aramaic was a common language at that time in the courts. Later became the common language of that whole part of southwest Asia. And because it was the court language of Babylon, this particular section, which involves the court of Babylon is written in Aramaic, which is a language similar to the language Hebrew, although different in many ways.

So then spoke the Chaldeans in Aramaic, and they said this: "O king, live forever." You always say that to a king, right? That's just standard fare. O King, live forever. Long live the king, you know, court etiquette. And so they go through with that deal and they said, "Tell thy servants the dream and we will show the interpretation." What confidence. Just tell us your dream, king, and we'll tell you exactly what it means. We'll go back and we'll get our dream manuals and we'll find out what your dream means. We'll show you the interpretation. All they needed to know was the dream.

But the king wasn't about to operate on their conditions. Look at verse 5. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "The thing is gone from me." It's gone from me. "If you will not make known unto me the dream with the interpretation of it, you shall be cut in pieces and your houses shall be made a dung hill." Now he is upset. That dream has really disturbed him.

You see, and then he says in verse 6, "But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore, show me the dream and the interpretation of it." You got two choices, he says. You cannot show me the dream or its interpretations and I'll turn your houses into dunghills after I've chopped you to pieces. On the other hand, just tell me the dream and its interpretation and I'll give you great reward and great honor. It's easy. Ooh, he's putting them on the spot, see?

You know, I believe basically Nebuchadnezzar was a cynic. I believe Nebuchadnezzar was too smart to buy his own system. He must've thought the whole pile of them were a bunch of charlatans. And he finally got his moment where he'd really lay it on them heavy. You're so smart, you've got all this supernatural information, you're always saying you speak for the gods, you know the destinies of men. All right. Tell me the dream and it's interpretation. Let's see if you can pull it off.

And so added to his frustration and his irritability he decides to put a test on his court wise men in order to find out whether they've been telling him the truth in the past and if they're worth anything in the future. By the way, in the Orient it was considered ominous to forget a dream. It meant the gods were angry with you so he was really panicky.

He makes the statement in verse 5, "the thing is gone from me." Now some people have translated that differently. Some say that it can me that I am sure of it and say the very opposite. That he does know the dream and he's holding it back from them. It's so difficult for me, you know, in studying all these commentaries, one goes one way, one goes another. I think the weight of evidence - and you can trust me at this point for it - is on the side that he had forgotten the dream. It seems the only thing that makes sense in the context.

And I believe it makes sense from God's viewpoint too. I really feel God's involved in this and that God wanted him to forget the dream in order for, once and for all, to reveal the whole fakery of all the supposed wise men and their idols. It's devastating to Babylonian wisdom. And I think it sets up Daniel for the rest of the years of his life as the mouthpiece of God unequaled by any of the Babylonian wise men.

And so I think he's giving them the ultimate test. He is tyrannical, he is unreasonable, he is demanding and in the process he's going to find out whether they're for real or not. Luphold, who's a very fine Old Testament commentator, says "we venture to say that if the Chaldeans have not made

pretense of having access to the deepest and most completely hidden things, the king would never had made this unreasonable request of them."

I mean as long as they were going to pretend to know all the secrets he wanted to find out if they knew this one. This phrase there in verse 5 "used to be cut to pieces" is amazing. I'll whack you into little pieces. That's a pretty devastating thing for a whole huge group of people. And then he says I'll make your house a manure pile.

You know, this was often done. When somebody had dishonored themselves or somebody wanted to be defamed or someone wanted them to be defamed rather, they would kill the person, they would smash down the house and they would build a public outhouse on the same piece of property. I'll turn your houses into outhouses is what he said. Read 2 Kings 10:27, you'll see it there.

On the other hand, if you do what I ask you to do, I'll reward you greatly. Well, look at their reply in verse 7. They answer again and said, "Let the king tell the servants the dream and we'll show the interpretation." They're really sticking to their ground. They really haven't got any other choice. Just give us the dream, king. Don't be unreasonable.

See, they faced an impossible dilemma. There was no way they were gonna come up with the dream. And I, as I said, believed God let the king forget in order that God might show the stupidity of their whole dumb phony system of religion. They didn't have any corner on divine truth. They didn't descend into the supernatural world at all. They couldn't do a thing with their fakery and their trickery unless they knew the dream.

So the king replied in verse 8, the king answered and said, "I know of certainty that you would gain the time, because you see this thing is gone from me. All you want is to buy time, that's all. You're just stalling. You're stalling. Hoping that I'll forget about it and it'll all blow over and it'll cool off. You're just stalling." But verse 9: "If you will not make known to me the dream, there is but one decree for you. For you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me until the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation." He says, look, I'm going right back to verse 5. There's only decree for you if you don't tell me that dream. I'll cut you in pieces and your homes will be made into a manure pile. There's no alternative at all.

Why? Look at it in verse 9. This gives his true indication of how he felt about these guys. For you have prepared, literally, wicked lies to speak before me. That's why I say he wasn't even convinced of his own system. He saw the phoniness in the whole thing. I'm sure he knew the past stuff that they had told wasn't true. That they had made great predictions that never came to pass. He didn't believe the whole thing, he was cynical. He may have been sort of an atheist at this point, not believing in any god. And he wanted to show them up for the phonies that they were.

Amazing that God uses this man against his own system. So the dream and the dilemma. And he says nothing is different. "You have spoken wicked lies and all you're waiting for" - verse 9 - "is for the time to change. You're just trying to buy time. You better tell me the dream and you better show me its interpretation."

The dream, the dilemma and that leads thirdly to the deficiency, the deficiency, verse 10, and we've already seen it. But what they really claim here is that the kind is asking them to do something that's impossible. The Chaldean group answered before the group and said, "There is not a man upon the Earth that can reveal the king's matter." Do you see the significance in that? You want to know something? They were flat-out right, weren't they? There wasn't a man on the Earth that could reveal it. Such truth doesn't come from the Earth.

Listen, if you think that anybody could really predict the future on the Earth, you're wrong. If you think there's anything to that horoscope stuff other than demonic influence and mind control, you're wrong. There is no such thing as reading the future. The only place you're going to read the future is in the Bible when God talks about it. And they were right. There is not a man on the Earth that can reveal the king's matter. Therefore there is no king, lord nor ruler that asks such things of any magician or astrologer or Chaldean.

They say no king and no ruler, no nobody great and powerful as he may be would ever ask anything like this because no human can do it. You know what their experience told them? That there were limits to what they could know. They could pull out their fakery but they couldn't read somebody's might. Now that's just a little insight but I thought about hat for a while yesterday and I thought that's interesting. That may well be an indication that Satan can't read our minds. Because if Satan could read our minds then, believe me, he could interpret our dreams and he could reiterate our thoughts.

I never believed that Satan can get inside and read our thoughts. And I think this may be an indication. These were Satan's agents: astrologers, mediums, spiritists, magicians, sorcerers, the whole pile of them. And they would've had experience in revealing dreams that were unspoken. They would've had experience in revealing thoughts that had been had in the night and in the day if Satan had access to those. But it seems to me that he does not.

So they try to flatter the king. O King, no Lord and no ruler, no matter how majestic he is, would ever ask this. Don't you want to rank with the greats? See? This is beyond any human ability.

Verse 11: "It is a rare thing that the king requires and there is no other that can reveal it before the king" - watch this - "except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh." Boy, in their stupidity they were right again. The only place you could get that information is from a supernatural source, right. It's not available on the Earth. What a dilemma. They are about to lose their life, they're about to lose

everything they possess, they have already lost all their credibility, they are given an impossible thing that they cannot do. They are trapped in the human deficiency.

Therefore forthly the decree. Because they couldn't tell the dream - the decree is given again in verse 12 - "for this caused the king" - watch this - "was angry and very furious." Now it would've been enough to say he was angry or furious, but just to make sure you get how mad he really was it puts both of them in there. He was angry, really, really, really angry. And he commanded to destroy - get this - all the wise men of Babylon.

Now that's the stupidity of anger. Anger never knows any limits. Anger never draws any parameters. Anger just smashes everybody who gets in front of it. He is mad. He is mad, number one, because he's afraid. He's scared to death about the dream he had. He is made because he can't remember the details. He is made because he can't trust his wise men. And if he can't trust his wise men to tell him the truth now, he's sure that all the things they've been telling him in the past are probably phony things too and he's upset because they criticize him and say he has no right to ask that. And he is mad, he is furious, he has stooped to the depths that some monarchs go to when their particular wills are crossed.

And so he just gives an execution order and says, "Slaughter every one of them." The idea of Babylon here, all the wise men of Babylon probably have reference to the city of Babylon only, not to the whole of the empire. Because when the whole area is referred to in the second chapter, verse 29, rather verse 49, it is called the Province of Babylon. So this may have been just the city but he says, "Kill them all. Kill them all.

Verse 13 - now watch - "And the decree went forth that he wise men should be slain and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain." Why? Because Daniel and his fellows were part of the core of court advisors. They were part of the "wise men." They were only apprentices and that's why I don't think they were originally in the group before the king. They had jus completed their training. But nonetheless they fit the category and so the executioners moved out to take their lives.

Now here we meet Daniel again in verse 13, and this is where we go from the forgotten dream to the unforgettable Daniel. Let's look at verse 14-30, the unforgettable Daniel. God has set him up. I mean you couldn't have a better set up, right? Has made a great big huge announcement to the king that none of this is not available to human beings. Only a god could reveal this. This is supernatural stuff, it's beyond us, nobody would ask this, we can't handle it, it's an impossibility and that is exactly where God wants the situation for his man Daniel. And he moves in.

He is God's man with a message. He is commissioned to reveal a great prophetic truth. He is a man for a crisis time. And again, marvelously, in the narrative from verses 14 to 30, says God unfold the character of Daniel from another perspective. We see his uncompromising [inaudible]. We see the

consequences of death. **[choppy audio]**

And I just want to pull it down to where we live and say this and then we're going to go through rather quickly. I really believe that there are certain principles that make you useful to God - we'll put it that way. Certain principles that make you useful to God. Certain character qualities that God really uses and Daniel has those. When you have these things you are useful to God in a crisis.

Now a lot of people are useful to God when there's no crisis. They can just kind of go along and do things when there's no storm going. But when the crisis hits, it separates the people with real commitment from those who are marginal. And when you get a crisis like this, an angry monarch who's about to slaughter all his wise men and God's strategic man Daniel is going to stand face-to-face, nose-to-nose with this king, you've got to have some deep character qualities. He is a man for a crisis.

I'll tell you why. First of all, because he had composure. He had composure. He never lost his cool. Verse 14 - here comes the executioner. His name is Ariac. Daniel answered, "With counsel and wisdom to Ariac, the captain of the king's guard who has gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon." Let me tell you something, everybody was frazzled from the king on down. Everybody was frenzied. Everybody was in a state of panic. Everybody would out of sorts. Everybody was frustrated. Everybody was in fear. They were all in turmoil except Daniel. He was calm, he was composed even though his life was on the line, he never panicked.

He had this amazing confidence in God. Eh knew his destiny rested in God's sovereign will. And those he was confronted by men in verse 14 who sought to take his life, there is no panic, there is no frustration, there is no despair. Just composure. People who respond like that in a crisis are already prepared before the crisis comes. They've already got it together.

Notice the statement in verse 14: he spoke with counsel and wisdom. That could as easily be translated wisdom and discretion. In other words, he spoke appropriately, he spoke reasonably. Daniel responded - here comes this guy and you can see them sweeping through the palace and all of the adjacent areas, collecting all these wise men to chop them into little pieces. And as they're doing all of this, they roll in one Daniel and they announce to him the decree and he simply and suitably and appropriately with great counsel, wisdom and discretion, begins a discussion with Ariac. Amazing. Composure.

The root term of captain comes from a verb that means to slay. He was the king's executioner. And I suppose you could've sent second in command. Isn't it kind of interesting that the king's own executioner comes. I'm sure he had a lot of other guys collecting a lot of other people. But when it came to Daniel, he went himself. That was of God. Because Daniel wanted to go back to the king and he would've had an easier road back to the king through the king's own executioner than through

some underling so God made sure the got the right guy.

Now at the same time, he must've been an authoritarian, rough, tough, feelingless individual or he wouldn't have been an executioner. So Daniel just talks wisely and suitably to him and they have this wonderful conversation. Verse 15 - he answered and said to Ariac, the king's captain, "Why is the decree so hasty from the king. What is the hurry, Ariac? What is the big hurry?" And I love this. Then Ariac made the thing known to Daniel. Ariac said, "Well, let me tell you about that, Daniel." Well, let me, sit down a minute. I'll tell you the whole story.

God is just controlling this guy's heart. He sits down and he gives his [inaudible]. You see, Daniel had the ability in the midst of panic to just put everybody at ease. That great calm, composed character. Boy, don't we look for somebody like that in the midst of a frenzy. In the midst of a panic, don't we look for the guy who's got it all together, who's just composed? And Daniel says, "Tell me about this. What's the big hurry?" He has no fear because his life is in God's hand. The mark of a useful life [inaudible]. Composure in a crisis. If you can't stay composed in a crisis, you're never really going to have an effective long-range ministry because ministry is all about meeting one crisis after another.

I thank God that through the years he's given me a sense of calm in the midst of chaos. Because the ministry of Christ is chaotic. And some who go through this kind of a thing fall victim to that kind of chaos. But others, by God's grace and God's grace alone are able to be sustained by their confident trust in Him and keep their call while everybody else is falling apart. And they're the rocks upon which God's work continue to move.

Secondly, he was no only composed he was courageous. Verse 16 - then Daniel went in, and apparently Ariac arranged an audience with the king. Isn't this amazing? Instead of killing of Daniel, Daniel gets a pass to see the king. Daniel went in and desire of the king. Now gets this, here's Daniel. He is a teenager, folks. He's got to be between 17 and 19 years old, just finished his three years of training. He's a Hebrew, which means he's a [inaudible]. He goes in to Nebuchadnezzar who is foaming at the mouth, fire and brimstone, wants everybody in pieces and here comes this young upstart, one of his wise men who is nothing but an apprentice. And he desired of the king that he would give him time and he would show the king the whole interpretation. King, I'm here to tell you if you just give me a little time, I'll tell you the whole thing.

Now what is the one thing that the wise men ask for? Time. What is the one thing he wouldn't give them? Time. What is the one thing Daniel asks for? What is the one thing he gets? Time. Must've been a difference in his approach. There was something courageous about him. His courage was almost audacious. Who is he to go before Nebuchadnezzar? But he had a strong confident faith in God and he was willing to face this frustrated, raging king.

You say now wait a minute. This is a little presumptuous. How did Daniel know he'd ever be able to tell that dream? Because Daniel knew what chapter 1, verse 17 said that God had given him the ability to reveal dreams and visions. He knew that. And I believe in his heart he knew as soon as he heard from Ariac that the king had a dream and he couldn't remember the dream and he didn't know how to interpret the dream, it clicked in Daniel's mind and Daniel said to himself, "This is where I enter the scene. My hour has arrived. Take me to the king." And he asks for time, and God gives him time, the very thing the king wouldn't give the others.

Say why did he do it for Daniel? Maybe because of chapter 1, verse 20 where it says that when a king examined those young men, he found Daniel and the others to be ten times wiser than the wisest men in Babylon. Maybe he said, well, you know, he is ten times wiser than everybody else. Maybe a little time won't hurt. But I'm amazed at the courage. Nobody threatened his life. He'd walk up nose-to-nose with Nebuchadnezzar no matter how much power he had because he knew God was on his side.

These first elements are necessary, beloved and fulfilling any commission in a crisis. If you don't have composure and courage you'll never make it through. When you know you stand on God's word, beloved, when you know you have God's truth under girding what you do, you can be composed and courageous no matter what kind of chaos that's going on around them.

Remember the apostle Paul and the shipwreck? The sea was in turmoil, they had jettice in the cargo. They were in the dark. They hadn't eaten in 14 days. They were waiting to crash and smash and all drown on the rocks of the north coast of Africa. In the midst of all of this with the frenzy and the panic going on, Paul stands up and says, "All right, everybody. Be of good cheer. For nobody shall be lost. We'll only lose the boat." Sure, sure. We're going to lose the boat and we're all going to make it? What are you telling us? He said, "You know why I say that? You know why I'm so composed and so courageous in the midst of this shipwreck? Because an angel of God who's I am and whom I served stood beside me last night and said to me from the Lord himself that not one life in this boat will be lost."

You want to know something, people, you can be composed and courageous anytime in any crisis when you know you stand on the authority of God's revealed word, right? If you're doing what's right, you have nothing to fear.

Thirdly, we see here not only a characteristic of composure and courage but communion - and I love this - communion. Verse 17: "Then Daniel went to his house and he made the thing known that Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah are his companions." He went back and he said, "Hey, guys, you got to hear this. The king's going to give me some time to work on this." Now what are we going to do? Well, let's get to the manuals, man. Let's get the dream manuals out and get this thing worked over. No. What were they going to do that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven

concerning this secret that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men on Babylon. What do you mean that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven? That's just a long way of saying they immediately began to what? Pray. They started to pray. Daniel's confidence was in God so he immediately sought communion with the Lord. God's very special servants are people of prayer, greatly dependent on Him. Now Daniel could've said, "With my character, I'm righteous. I have nothing to fear." Why I have the gift of dreams and visions. Why I have a past record of great successes. Why I feel confident and able to do this whole deal. I'll just go in there and then do it.

Listen, I don't care what your gifts are, I don't care what your record of success is, I don't care how highly you evaluate your competence. Anybody who goes into any kind of a crisis ministry knows full well that you go in first of all on your knees or you're the biggest fool of all. He didn't expect to receive what he needed without prayer. He didn't expect to receive it because he observed that it would have to be from the mercy of the God in heaven. He didn't look to men's wisdom and look up the dream books. He got on his knees.

And, beloved, that's the way to approach a crisis. God's men in a crisis goes to his knees. God's men in a crisis doesn't take his troubles to other people, the takes his troubles to God. Maybe he gathers other people to pray with him as he did, but he goes to God as a final point of contact.

What a contrast to the Babylonian religion. The Babylonian religion worshipped all the stars. But - I love this - but Daniel and his friends went to the God of heaven. I think that's just a kind of a little dig at the Babylonian system. They studied all about the heavens but they didn't know the God of heaven. And they prayed. Mary Queen of Scots said, "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than an army of 10,000 men." They laid hold of God in prayer and got answered. And in the middle of the night, God gave them the answer. The dream was made clear.

Verse 19 begins "then was the secret revealed onto Daniel in a night vision." Wow. In the middle of the night of prayer, God gives the secret. That leads to a fourth characteristic of a man in crisis, commendation. What do you mean by that? Well, look at verse 19.

"Then Daniel blessed to God of heaven." Commendation is just another word for praise. I looked it up in the dictionary and it's a synonym. He commended God, he praised God. Daniel gave the glory to God.

What a tremendous young man he is. Amazing wisdom for his years. Follow in verse 20. Daniel answered and said, "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever. For wisdom and might are his and He changeth the times and the seasons. He removeth kings and seteth up kings. He giveth wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who know understanding. He revealth the deep and secret things. He knoweth what is in the darkness and the light dwelleth with Him." That's a great statement, beloved. That's a psalm really. That's a psalm. A hymn of praise.

He begins by saying blessed be the name of God. That's all that God is. He blesses him for his wisdom and his might, for his power in verse 21. Omnipotence, he changes the times and the seasons. He removes kings. He sets up other kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who know understanding. That omnipotence.

Verse 22 is omniscience. He reveals the deep and secret things. He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwelleth with him. He is extolling God, commending God.

Then in verse 23, "I thank thee and praise thee o thou God of my fathers who hast given me wisdom and might and made known onto me now what we desire of thee for thou hast now made onto us the king's matter." Apparently he shared it with the three because it says we and us.

Listen, Daniel was not stuck with Babylonian fatalism but a sovereign, wise and powerful God. And when God heard his prayer, Daniel gave God praise and thanks in a psalm that is a model for psalms of praise. Listen, mark the man in crisis. He is composed. He is courageous. He is in communion with his God and when he hears an answer, he commends his God.

Just two more quickly and we'll close this section. Daniel was also marked by compassion. Verse 24: "Therefore Daniel went into to Ariac whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon." He went and said thus onto him just to make sure nothing happened, just to make sure he didn't go through with it. Before Daniel even went back to tell the king his dream, he went to Ariac and he said destroy not the wise men of Babylon. Bring me in before the king and I'll reveal onto the king the interpretation.

Daniel is now in control of the whole situation. He says, "Don't destroy the wise men." Now get this: the last order Ariac had was from Nebuchadnezzar. This order is from Daniel. Who is Daniel? Some kid. Some Hebrew captive that's popped out of nowhere and he's now telling me what to do. But he was in control. He said just take me to the king and I'll reveal to the king the interpretation. Don't slay the wise men. I think Daniel had compassion on them. I think Daniel cared about them. He knew they were lost in idolatry. He knew they were doomed to hell. The didn't want them to die.

Verse 25: "And Ariac brought in Daniel before the king in haste." The word in haste means in much alarm, much excitement. He was really excited. He was in a mad hurry. I'm sure he didn't want to do this slaughter anyway. So Ariac brings in Daniel in an excited, energetic way. And he says to the king, "I have found the man of the captives of Judah that will make know onto the king the interpretation." I think he takes a little more credit than he deserves. Daniel really came to him. But, you know, when you're an underling of the king you want to do all you can to earn those points. So he says I just got the man. Boy, he can tell you the answers and he can give you the dream and the whole thing.

Verse 26 - the king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Beltashazzar. That was his Babylonian name. "Are you able to make known onto me the dream which I have seen and the interpretation of it." And by the way if he couldn't he'd really get it, postponing all of this so long with no real resolution. Can you do this? Can you really do it? Both the dream and the interpretation? He's got some doubts because he's doubting the whole supernatural area because all of his supernaturalists have failed him.

So Daniel is marked by compassion and he goes to the king. We've come to the last characteristic of Daniel. Humility, that's Daniel. In spite of all of the gifts - I mean the guy was handsome beyond description. He was brilliant, he was spiritual, he was physically just a specimen unlike any other. He had this amazing training ten times wiser than anybody else. Here he is in the audience of the king. Not only that he can read visions and dreams and tell the future. Amazing. If anything had anything to be proud about, Daniel did, but look at his spirit in verse 27.

Daniel answered in the presence of the king and said the secret the kingeth demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the suesayers reveal unto the king? Just rubbing it in, see. Salt it the wound. He just wants him to affirm again that the whole pile of them are worthless. He wants to set himself against them. He wants to set the true god against the false deities. They can't do it can they? With all of their stuff they're useless in the real crisis.

And then verse 28. "But there is a God in heaven who revealeth secrets and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." That's a term that refers to the fullness of the time in the mind of the writer. Or the fullness of time in reference to the specific prophesy. It varies from prophesy to prophesy. The latter times of the prophecy given, the latter days of the prophecy given. In this case, the latter days of the prophecy given encompass all the way to the millennial kingdom. He says, "There's a God in heaven and this God in heaven reveals those secrets and he has given you the knowledge of what will be in the latter days. They dream and divisions of thy head upon thy bed are these," and then he goes on to tell him about how he went to bed and he was lying down. And, you know, this must've been a shock for Nebuchadnezzar because Daniel rehearsed all the events of him lying down and thinking about the future and so forth and so on.

And then in verse 29 it says, "And he who revealth secrets" - that's a new name for God in the Bible, never used before - "makes to thee what shall come to pass." The God of heaven has given you this dream. But look at verse 30. I love this.

But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living but for their sakes I shall make known the interpretation to the king and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart. Hey, he says, I can't take any credit for this. I'm not anybody special. I'm not anybody better than anybody else. God is the revealer of secrets. He has done it for his own purposes.

What a heart of humility. Listen, the man for a crisis is rightly related to himself. He's got it together in his own heart. The man for a crisis is rightly related to God. He has it right with the Lord. The man for a crisis is rightly related to other people. He loves them and he doesn't think of himself as better than they.

Daniel is an incredibly rare kind of man. And that's exactly why God used him the way he used him. An that's exactly why when Ezekiel recited three righteous men of history he put Daniel in the middle. Even though Daniel was a contemporary he was an unusual man. A choice servant.

Next week, we're going to find out what the dream said. Don't miss it. Let's pray:

Father, thank you for our time tonight. Bless these dear people. What an encouragement they are to my own heart. We've gone through this whole narrative tonight, Lord, and maybe we haven't touched some practical things that some might have needed so we pray that the holy spirit would do that. We haven't a tenth what could've been told out of the narrative but perhaps, Father, enough that we get a grip on what it is to be a man in a crisis useful to you. O God, help the men and the women and the young people here and myself to be like Daniel was. To have such uncompromising commitment that we develop the kind of character we see manifest in the first chapter, that we are able to receive a commission from you to function in the midst of a crisis as Daniel was. We want to be the people fit for the Master's use like Daniel was. Give us his kind of character. And though you can't use us in this hour for revelation, you can use us to preach that revelation, to live that truth, to bring others to its knowledge if we're the kind of people you can depend on. Mold us, Lord, to be what you want us to be. For your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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