

Andrew Hall

4/29/2026

Daniel 1 Sermon: God's Favor for His Faithful in Babylon

I want to start off with a simple observation. There is something deeply wrong with this world. There is so much evil, so much death, so much violence. Study history and you'll see a pattern: one kingdom invades a nation, plunders their riches, and enslaves their people, and then that kingdom gets conquered by another, more powerful kingdom, and the whole cycle continues. Democracy, religious freedom, education, Walmart, and all the abundance of wealth and prosperity we have today in America have not been the norm for the entirety of human history. Tyranny, violence, subjugation, and bloodshed have been the status quo. It's incredibly dark and depressing.

But that's not the full picture, and that's not the story you came to hear tonight. God is the writer of history, and He has been writing the most glorious, beautiful, and hope-filled story of redemption. And sometimes, there are people who refuse to give into the darkness around them, and their story is so remarkable that we write it down to remember it for decades to come.

My message for tonight is simple. God is sovereign over the world, and God gives favor to His faithful. We're going to see in this opening chapter of Daniel that even in the darkest situations, God is still working to accomplish His good and glorious purposes, and He will pour out His favor upon those like Daniel who live by faith in Him.

The title of my sermon is "God's Favor for His Faithful in Babylon."

Before we jump into the text, I'll share a brief intro to the book of Daniel. Last week Tony gave a more in-depth overview of the book with his 12 points, so I won't repeat too much.

Chapter 1 of Daniel acts as a prologue to the book and introduces the main characters of our story – Daniel, our faithful servant of the Lord; King Nebuchadnezzar, the gentile king of Babylon, and the Lord, the divine King of Israel.^[1] It is story about a young Jewish teenager deported to Babylon who defied one of the most powerful rulers in the world. Scripture doesn't share a ton of details about Daniel's background. What we do know is that Daniel was born into the royal family of Israel, he was commended by Ezekiel for his righteousness along with Noah and Job (Ezek. 14:14), and Jesus referred to Daniel as a prophet (Matt. 24:15), all historical details reaffirming that Daniel is not a fictional story but a real biographical and historical work.
[2]

So, let's jump right in, starting with verse 1. **If you're taking notes, write this down for your first bullet: God gives Israel into the hands of Babylon (1:1-2).**

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

We are coming to arguably the darkest moment in Israel's history. The Old Testament is filled with laments and vivid descriptions of the sorrow Israel experienced from this. **Psalm 137 captures the emotion of the Jewish exiles:**

By the waters of Babylon,
there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.
2 On the willows there
we hung up our lyres.
3 For there our captors
required of us songs,
and our tormentors, mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
4 How shall we sing the LORD's song
in a foreign land?

This foreign land is Babylon. Babylon was the cultural and political center of the ancient near east for centuries.^[3] **Here's a map on the screen of Babylon's Empire, everything in green, and a little tiny circle where Israel is.** The Babylonian, or the Chaldean, Empire grew in power under King Nebuchadnezzar's dad, Nabopolassar, in the seventh century after overtaking the Assyrian Empire which had conquered the northern tribes of Israel in the 8th century. Eventually Babylon became a global superpower under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar from 605 BC to 562 BC.^[4] Nebuchadnezzar was sent to overthrow the Egyptian occupation of Palestine, and he did so successfully in 605 BC. That's when he made Jehoiakim the King of Judah into a Babylonian vassal, which is a subordinate ruler who must pay homage to another ruler.^[5] They worshiped a pantheon of gods including Marduk, whom the Babylonians worshiped as king of the gods.^[6] **Here's another slide showing what Marduk looked like. This was taken from a cylinder recovered in the 8th century.** It's fascinating how Babylon chose a serpent as the foundation of their god and thinking about how Scripture describes Satan as the serpent and the ultimate enemy of God and creation. The serpent isn't just a coincidence.

Babylon's captivity of Israel is a key event in God's redemptive history and is spoken of by the prophets and in the historical books of the Old Testament.

Scripture says that Jehoiakim was a wicked king. This judgment upon Israel didn't start with King Jehoiakim though. The degradation of Israel's worship had been spreading since Solomon's reign ended three hundred years before. God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, but Israel had tested Him for far too long. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah warned of this Babylonian captivity if Israel did not repent (e.g. Is. 39:6-7; Je. 21:3-10), and the covenant curses of Deuteronomy were finally enacted by God due to Israel's rebellion (i.e. Dt. 28:36-37, 47-49, 52, 58).^[7] **Here is one of the judgments described in Deuteronomy by Moses centuries before:**

³⁶“The Lord will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. ³⁷ And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away.

God loved His people so much, but they kept turning from Him for other gods. He gave them numerous opportunities to repent. He kept sending prophets warning them to turn from their evil ways, but none of Judah's leaders listened. Because of that, many Jews were slaughtered or taken captive away from their homeland. Babylon put the exiles under the yoke of slavery to build their extravagant palaces and building projects. Many were subjected to torture and death while some, like Daniel and his friends, were given privileges in the kingdom.^[8] The Jews no longer had access to the temple to offer sacrifices to the Lord. Despite all of this judgment for their rebellion, many of them adopted the idolatrous practices of their new pagan neighbors.^[9]

But the judgment and rebellion of Israel are not the main themes of the book of Daniel. The main message is that God is sovereign over all. That's why we picked the title for our series, “Every Knee Shall Bow.” Nothing can stop our God, even though the nations rage and plot against the Lord and His Anointed One.

Throughout the Bible, we see the theme of the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of darkness. In verse 1 of our passage, we see the city of Babylon versus the city of Jerusalem, the city of the world against the city of God, a cosmic conflict beginning in the garden of Eden when the Lord prophesied that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent in Genesis 3:15. This conflict will reach its climax at the end of this age with the ultimate destruction of Babylon the Great Prostitute in the book of Revelation.^[10] Jesus will return and destroy all evil and establish His perfect kingdom of righteousness. This is our hope!

What I did right there, that's called biblical theology. It tells the metanarrative, the overarching story, of the Bible. It pieces everything together and helps us understand who God is and what He is doing. Our destiny is eternal life with God, reigning in His kingdom on the earth. Before Christ, we were blinded by Satan and enslaved by the power of sin and death. But now in Christ,

we have been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God. In the meantime, there is a spiritual battle going on right now, every single day, between Satan with all his demonic powers and the Lord and His kingdom.

And a lot of times, it looks like Satan is winning, and while it certainly looked like that during Babylon's takeover, that was never the case. Daniel makes that very clear. Look at verse two:

² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.

There are several important details I want to highlight. First, verse 2 says *the Lord gave* Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. King Nebuchadnezzar thought he was the one who conquered Israel, but it was the Lord who gave him victory. If you look closely, the word for "Lord" in verse 2 is not God's covenant name, Yahweh, that's often translated in all caps LORD. This is the Hebrew word *adonay*, which means lord or master.[11] Again, Daniel is reiterating that the Lord is Lord! Not Babylon. This is what the sovereignty of God is. Every human and spiritual authority is under His authority.

So, God allows King Nebuchadnezzar to conquer Israel and take some of the sacred utensils from "the house of God," from Solomon's temple, to the house of his god, a Babylonian god named Nabu.^[12] Taking sacred elements from the temple was Babylon's way of boasting in their supposed victory over the God of Israel, *kind of like an Olympic athlete winning the gold medal for their country.*^[13] The Lord was a loser, and Nabu held the trophy for Babylon.

[...Pause...]

But not actually. That's not the story Daniel is telling us. The Hebrew literally says, "the house of *the* God." Daniel is basically saying there is *THE* God, the One True God, and there is *his* god, Nebuchadnezzar's fake god of Babylon.[14] *This wasn't the first time a pagan nation tried to claim victory over the Lord. Do you remember what happened with the Philistines and the ark in 1 Samuel? Our youth group should! God gave Israel into the hand of the Philistines as an act of judgment for their pride. They thought they could use the ark as some lucky talisman to conquer their enemies. The Philistines took the ark of the covenant, put it in the temple of Dagon, their Philistine fish god, and the next day the statue of Dagon fell before the ark with its hands and head chopped off. The same thing is happening here. God has not been defeated! He is not confined to buildings or statues. Thus saith the Lord, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool."*

And then verse 2 says that King Nebuchadnezzar takes the utensils back to "the land of Shinar." Shinar is another name for Babylon, but why did Daniel write "the land of Shinar"? This is a direct reference to the tower of Babel. [15] In Genesis 11, Shinar was the place where a bunch of

people tried to build a city and a tower all the way to heaven. It became a symbol of prideful, wicked rebellion against God. The New Testament connection is what we know as “the world,” the system and culture around us that rejects God and His righteousness. 1 John says that anyone who loves the things of the world cannot have the love of God. The things of the world and the things of God are hostile to each other. The world tells you to make a name for yourself, to forget God, and to live for the here and now. It has such a powerful pull, even on us as followers of Jesus.

The book of Revelation adds to this symbolism and expands the vivid picture of Babylon as the archetype of demonic evil. **Listen to this from chapter 17. John is writing about the Great Prostitute:**

And he [an angel] carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. ⁵And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.” ⁶ And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

Babylon is big, Babylon is beautiful, and Babylon is blasphemous. Even though Daniel’s original audience didn’t have the book of Revelation, they still would have experienced the horror of God’s most evil enemy conquering Israel when they heard this story. And verse 2 from our passage in Daniel is deeper than just an event in the history of the people of Israel. Behind the physical is a spiritual reality. The Bible is telling the story of a cosmic battle happening in the spiritual realm. Demonic rulers, spiritual authorities and principalities of darkness in the heavenly realms, led by Satan himself as the serpent, these are the forces clashing against God and His people, and Babylon is a symbol of that spiritual kingdom of wickedness and idolatry, the domain of darkness as Paul says in Colossians.

[...Pause...]

This is where God’s people are being taken, into a nation that hates God and everything He loves. But, as evil and terrifying as Babylon is, God is still more powerful. He is **THE** God of Israel in a world of false gods.

And yet, the situation remains grim for Israel. Babylon killed Israel’s soldiers, women, and children and would eventually plunder and burn the temple and destroy the walls and palaces of Jerusalem.

Not only do they destroy Israel’s most important city, they are now attempting to entirely erase Israel’s identity by indoctrinating their most talented men.

Let’s continue in verses 3-5:

³ Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴ youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king.

Here is Babylon's strategy: we're going to simultaneously cripple Israel by stealing their most capable future leaders and strengthen ourselves by enlisting these young men in our kingdom.

[16] Ashpenaz, one of their chief officials, finds Israel's best and brightest young men, teenagers, from the royal family. [17] Look at all these attributes: no blemishes (no physical abnormalities), good appearance (strong, attractive, athletic), skillful, wise, endowed with knowledge, understanding, and learning, competent and confident to stand before the king. **Basically, these kids probably would have been all state athletes, national merit scholars, and contestants on America's Got Talent.**

Because they are young enough to be moldable and teachable, Nebuchadnezzar can shape them into model Babylonian citizens, competent in all the history and culture of the Chaldeans. Erase and replace is the motto. He is completely erasing everything godly about them. Let's do a factory reset on these kids. Like widgets placed on an assembly line, they are immersed in Babylonian literature, language, culture, and tradition for 3 years and are inspected at the end of their indoctrination program for quality assurance purposes. You might as well take advantage of these bright, strong, capable kids rather than kill them.

When I studied political philosophy in college, I remember learning about Emperor Mao and the Cultural Revolution in China in the 1950's and 60's. One thing that stuck with me was Mao's Little Red Book. This was basically like a pocket Bible of Mao's communist propaganda and teachings that the government used to brainwash and enslave the people. Everyone was required to carry the book with them at all times everywhere. If you didn't have the book with you, soldiers could arrest, imprison, and torture you. And they went even further. Soldiers could come up to you in the streets and command you to recite lines from Mao's Little Red Book, and if you didn't say it right, the same fate was in store. They used propaganda, fear, and peer pressure to control people into being loyal members of the state. We don't know exactly what type of curriculum Nebuchadnezzar had, but we do know that everything about it was hostile to the Lord and His righteousness.

[...Pause...]

But remember, God is still sovereign! Tony mentioned last week that all of this happened according to a prophecy from Isaiah that descendants of King Hezekiah would serve in the palace of the king of Babylon.^[18]

And here we learn about our lucky contestants who have been chosen for this exclusive program! Look at verses 6-7:

⁶ Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷ And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

One thing I love about the Bible is the importance of names. Names mean something. A name reveals your identity, your purpose, and your God.

Listen to these awesome names: Daniel means “God is my judge,” Hananiah means “Yahweh is gracious,” Mishael means “who is like God?”, and Azariah is “Yahweh has helped.”^[19] Their identity is rooted in the holy God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the same God we know today in the Trinity as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But these weren’t awesome to King Nebuchadnezzar. No, they needed names honoring the gods of Babylon. Each new name was a deliberate corruption of their original name, replacing worship of the Lord with worship of the gods of Babylon.^[20] These Jews were no longer children of God but slaves of Babylon.^[21]

Again, this looks like a horrible situation, but remember that God’s power is always at work.

Write this down as the second point: **God preserves a faithful remnant in Babylon (1:3-7).**

There were some problems with Nebuchadnezzar’s plan. First, people are not robots. You can’t always get them to do what you want. Second, these weren’t your average teenagers. These were devout followers of the Lord. They feared God more than man.

Look at the first half of verse 8:

⁸ But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king’s food, or with the wine that he drank.

This is a key verse from the passage. Daniel *resolved*. He decided, resolutely, with full conviction, no matter what the cost, not to be defiled. Daniel was not going to do anything that would have profaned God’s sacred name. Daniel was holy, set apart for the Lord’s purposes. The text does not explicitly say what was defiling about eating the king’s food, but because the Jews were under the Mosaic Law, they were forbidden from eating certain foods like pork and meat with any of the blood.^[22] Eating the king’s food probably would have rendered them ceremonially unclean and would have been a sin against God. Not only that, but eating the food most likely meant that you would have participated in some type of pagan sacrifice to the gods of

Babylon.[23] Eating was so tied up with the wicked culture of Babylon, and Daniel couldn't participate in something that dishonored the Lord.

We're not under the Mosaic Law, but this passage is still incredibly relevant for us today. How we need men and women like Daniel! Daniel was a man of God taken into enemy territory and pressured to conform to the culture around him. We are in a very similar situation. As the New Testament puts it, we are sojourners and exiles in this world. This world is not our home. We are in the world but not of the world.

And this world is filled with invisible, real, spiritual forces of evil that are trying to thwart the kingdom of God. Satan is real. Demons are real. And the power of the flesh is real. They're all fighting against the people of God every single day, trying to destroy them or defile them with the traps of sin. We can see how Satan is using the culture around us to choke out everything that is good, beautiful, true, and godly. Our media and entertainment glorifies sex, violence, and materialism and leaves people enslaved.

We're all susceptible to the influence of the world if we're not careful. Like James says, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." May the Lord help us in this. We have to remain resolved, awake, and prayerful. Satan doesn't play fair. Temptation sneaks up on us! We have to be prepared when the hour of temptation arrives, when that time of testing comes.

[...Pause...]

And the time of testing has arrived for Daniel.

Write this down as your third point: God tests His faithful servants (1:8-16).

Let's keep reading. Picking back up in verse 8:

Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. ⁹ And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ¹⁰ and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king."

God graciously caused the official to have compassion upon Daniel. Wow! Clearly a sign that God is yet again still in control working to protect Daniel. Defying the king's food was an incredibly risky move. This isn't like politely declining your grandma's casserole that you eat every single thanksgiving. The food would have been the finest, richest food you could think of, the best of the best. This made me think of the linemen in the NFL. I remember watching a video about chefs who work for these NFL teams to prepare the food and nutrition protocol for the players. These guys are massive, and they're competing at the highest level in the world. When you get to the pros, you get access to the best food and supplements to help you be the biggest,

strongest football player you can be. They're eating 4,000-5000 calories, 6 meals a day, tons of steak and eggs and protein shakes, all that. And also a lot of chocolate milk... I think that's the secret.[24]

So Daniel is in this Babylonian training program competing with all these other men to excel in the king's court, and he's turning down the best food you could ask for. Not only that, this would have been a direct insult to the king, a king who has a track record of making rash decisions, and everyone else besides Daniel was eating the food. This would have jeopardized his advancement in the kingdom, and this was a huge risk for Ashpenaz, the one who was responsible for their development. If Daniel and his crew turned out to be scrawny and weak by not eating the king's food, Ashpenaz likely would have been killed.[25]

But Daniel was *resolved*, so he proposes a plan. Let's look at this plan in verses 11-14:

¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." ¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days.

Let's stop at verse 14. Here's Daniel's plan: instead of eating meat and drinking wine, we're going to only eat vegetables (this would have included grains and seeds too) and drink just water, and then after 10 days, compare us to everybody else and see the results.[26]

This is an ultimate test of faith. Eating only vegetables and water doesn't make you stronger and bigger. It does the opposite! If you want to bulk up, you'd eat a lot of protein and meat and calories, like those NFL lineman. This was a total act of faith. It didn't matter what was going to happen if he chose to just eat vegetables. Daniel *resolved* not to defile himself. It didn't matter to him if he lived or died. What mattered was faithfulness to God.

But Daniel also knew that nothing was impossible for God. Daniel knew that God could use vegetables and water to make him stronger than everybody else. Daniel knew His God! Daniel had faith in something that would naturally fail but through God's promise would supernaturally prevail; faith in something that was completely backwards according to the human wisdom of the day. This is a pattern in God's economy. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians,

²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

God uses what is despised and foolish in the world to show His glory and power, and God works through His faithful servants to establish His reign on the earth when you least expect it.

This is the message of the gospel. Jesus accomplished redemption not through political domination but through public humiliation at the cross. God used what looked like Satan's greatest victory, the death of the Messiah, to accomplish the greatest act of redemption the world will ever know—forgiveness of sins, eternal salvation, and the reconciliation of all things under Christ. His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

Remember that when your circumstances look horrible. Remember that when the pain is unbearable, when tragedy strikes, when you can't understand why God will allow such horrible, unspeakable evils to happen to you or to those you love. Like Daniel, who lost everything he loved to one of his worst enemies, remember that God is still working in the midst of the chaos and evil to accomplish salvation in your life.

Okay, back to Daniel. We have seen the horror Israel is facing, we see King Nebuchadnezzar taking the finest men of Israel through an indoctrination program, and we have just seen how Daniel responded to one of the hardest tests of faith he's ever seen. Now, for the best part: it's time to see God pour out His favor upon Daniel. Look at verse 15:

¹⁵ At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. ¹⁶ So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

God pours out His favor on Daniel because of his faith. After just 10 days of eating only vegetables, Daniel and his crew were stronger and bigger than all the other Babylonians. This isn't a prescription for the Daniel diet or eating some Ezekiel bread (as good as it is). It's not about Daniel's food. It's about Daniel's faith. And Daniel didn't have faith in the food. He had faith in the Lord! We don't trust in our abilities or resources. We trust in God. And God used what should have made Daniel weaker to make him stronger than everybody else.

And God continues to pour out His favor. Write this down as the fourth bullet: God shows favor to his faithful servants (1:17-21)

Continuing in verse 17:

¹⁷ As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Again, **the Lord** is responsible for the advancement of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. God **gave** them learning and skill, and for Daniel in particular, God gave him the gift of prophecy and interpreting dreams. This is huge. Dream interpretation was a vital aspect of Babylonian wisdom, and God is going to use this gift throughout the rest of Daniel's ministry. [27]

Continuing in verse 18,

¹⁸ At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. ²⁰ And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

The end of the three-year training program has arrived, and Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have outperformed everybody in their class. They were ten times better than all the royal magicians and enchanters in the kingdom. These magicians weren't pulling rabbits out of their hats or cards out of their sleeves. They were actually pulling livers out of sheep. Not even kidding.

Tony said I could nerd out on the ancient near eastern history, so I'm gonna make sure you get your money's worth tonight. And I'll make sure you're still listening. **On the screen you'll see a clay model of a sheep's liver. This is a model of what these pagan magicians would use to** practice divination to predict the future and gain insight from demons on how to fight. That's what they did, along with studying the stars to gain religious wisdom.

The text also mentions enchanters. They were involved in summoning spirits and performing magic spells.[28] Magic arts, witchcraft, and sorcery were all banned under the Mosaic Law. And all that stuff is still happening today by the way, including here in America with pagan religions like Wicca. Even though Daniel and his crew learned about these practices, they weren't using these idolatrous practices to get their wisdom and knowledge. They went directly to the God of the universe, and everyone could see the results.

Daniel is a model for how to engage with the culture. How do we follow Jesus in an environment hostile to God? How do we live in the world but not of the world? I studied finance in college, and I heard a lot of horrible stories about people in finance, especially in investment banking. I had one friend who told a story about seeing executives doing cocaine in the bathroom at a happy hour. I had another friend who said his boss would scream and curse people out on Zoom calls and pressure him to lie to clients about their results, and he told me, "I'm not sure I can be a Christian and work in investment banking."

Daniel demonstrated that it's possible to advance in the world and remain faithful to the Lord. Don't be afraid to pursue a career. Use it as an opportunity to glorify God like Daniel! But also know that there will be challenges.

It may be incredibly hard. But like Daniel, we pursue our jobs with excellence, we interact with our leaders with grace and respect, we understand the temptations around us and decide beforehand that we will not defile ourselves, and when the time comes, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the Lord. If you're at work, it could be the temptation to bill more hours than you worked, or your boss pressuring you to fudge the numbers or lie to a client. Or if you're at

school, it could be the pressure to cheat on your tests and quizzes because everyone else is doing it, go to that party you know you shouldn't go to, or participate in gossip.

Let's look at the final verse of the chapter.

²¹ And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

This last verse is more than just a historical detail. Daniel outlived Nebuchadnezzar and all his successors and saw the Lord's power undo everything that Nebuchadnezzar tried to accomplish as the most powerful man in the world.^[29] The Lord is just getting started with Daniel, and we'll get to hear all about his life and ministry in the coming weeks.

But for now, please consider this question as we close: What would **you** do if you were in Daniel's shoes?

Would you comply with the king's orders and try to rationalize your decision? That would have been very easy. After all, it's just food, and we can't keep most of the Law anyways since the Temple is gone and we're not in Israel anymore. And surely, God wants me to do everything I can to advance in my career, right?

Or, would you muster up the courage to defy the king and refuse to be defiled?

Over and over again, God has delivered His people out of the worst circumstances. God supernaturally strengthened Daniel and his friends with some broccoli and spinach, and He will sustain you through whatever challenge you're going through. Rest in that.

Because of the cross, because Jesus lives, we can live like Daniel. Our faith is not in a dead Savior, but in a risen One, not in a distant Savior, but in an ever-present One who lives in us, right now, through His Spirit! It is the Spirit of Jesus Christ who empowers you to overcome every evil that you will face in this life. Regardless of the trial, Jesus will be there with you in your trial to strengthen you by His Spirit. Whether it's a life-or-death situation like what Daniel faced or whether it feels like a life-or-death situation, Jesus is greater.

Whatever temptation you face, remain steadfast in the Lord. And if you've given into something that defiles you, turn from it and run to Jesus. There is hope for those who repent and cling to the cleansing power of Jesus. If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Jesus is the same One who will keep you from stumbling and cleanse you when you do stumble.

I'll conclude with this wonderful promise from 1 Peter. Remember, Peter, unlike Daniel, utterly failed when the pressure turned up. But the Lord had mercy on Peter. He learned just how powerful our God is in trials, and he would ultimately give up his life as a martyr.

Hear these words of comfort and hope from 1 Peter:

⁶In this [salvation] you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Rejoice whenever you face trials, knowing that God is working all things together for your good and His glory. Stay strong in your faith, and He will pour out His favor upon you. Let's pray.

-
- [1] Douglas Mangum, ed., [Lexham Context Commentary: Old Testament](#), Lexham Context Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Da 1:1–21.
- [2] J. Dwight Pentecost, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1323.
- [3] William R. Osborne, "[Babylon](#)," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).
- [4] Elliot Ritzema, "[Nebuchadnezzar](#)," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).
- [5] Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., "[Vassal](#)," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 966.
- [6] William L. Kelly, "[Babylon, Culture of](#)," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).
- [7] Sinclair B. Ferguson, "[Daniel](#)," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 749.
- [8] Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "[Exile](#)," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 734.
- [9] Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "[Exile](#)," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 734. See Ezekiel 8 for examples of the Jews worshipping Babylonian gods.
- [10] Sinclair B. Ferguson, "[Daniel](#)," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 749.
- [11] Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary Volume 18 - Daniel*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1994), 58.
- [12] Sinclair B. Ferguson, "[Daniel](#)," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 749.
- [13] Dale Ralph Davis, *The Message of Daniel: His Kingdom Cannot Fail*, ed. Alec Motyer and Derek Tidball, The Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 29.
- [14] Miller 58.
- [15] Miller 59.
- [16] Sinclair B. Ferguson, "[Daniel](#)," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 749.
- [17] Miller, 59-60. "From the royal family" is literally "from the seed of the kingship." Miller notes that their noble status could be implied by their heritage from the tribe of Judah, the tribe of kings, or because they came from the house of King Zedekiah according to the Jewish historian Josephus. Regardless, the text says they were of noble heritage, and he points that this is a partial fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that descendants of Hezekiah would be taken as officials to Babylon (cf. Isa. 39:7).
- [18] Miller 60.
- [19] Miller 64.
- [20] Miller 65.
- [21] Sinclair B. Ferguson, "[Daniel](#)," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 749.
- [22] Thomas Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 388.
- [23] Miller 66-67.
- [24] For instance, here is a meal plan from the 49ers: [Niners Nutrition: What a 49ers Lineman Eats in a Day](#)
- [25] Miller 67.
- [26] Miller 69.
- [27] Miller 71.
- [28] Miller 73.
- [29] Sinclair B. Ferguson, "[Daniel](#)," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 750.

