

GODLY LIVING IN A GODLESS WORLD

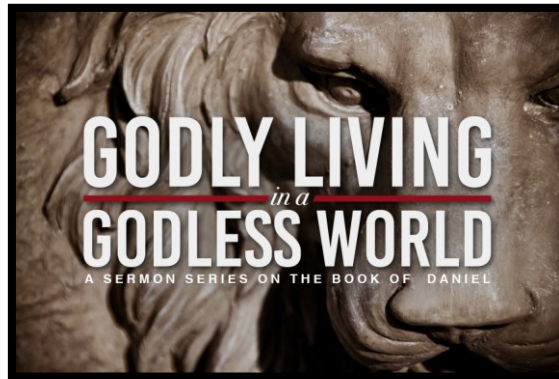
Expositional Study Of Daniel

Daniel 2:19-30

Written By

©Pastor Marty Baker

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We've heard the familiar words before, especially when we travel abroad. Why, you might even hear them around our country since we have so many international people living here.

- Mahalo
- Grazie
- Merci
- Arigato
- Gracias
- Danke
- Todah
- Gamawo
- Spasibo

When you are in a foreign country, even if you aren't fluent, you will want to make sure you can, at least, say "thank you" when people do nice things for you. While traveling in Israel last April, I don't know how many times I said "Todah." It's just good manners to be thankful when someone has gone out of their way to assist you in some fashion.

I wonder, How does this principle apply in your relationship with the living God? We know from the story about the ten lepers Jesus healed only one actually turned to him and said "Todah" (Luke 17:16). The other nine simply ... and selfishly ... walked away. Amazing. Ninety

percent of those who experienced the touch of the Savior on their distorted, diseased lives rudely turned and walked off into their new lives. Only ten percent actually stopped to express heartfelt gratitude for a magnanimous movement of God in and on his life. Sort of reminds you of how people typically respond when you let them into thick traffic. How many never wave a hand of thanks? Many.

All of this moves me to ask a logical question, When God moves masterfully and lovingly in our lives, are we more like the nine lepers or the tenth one? God, as you might guess, based on Christ's response to the nine who walked away (Luke 17:17, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?"), we know which group He wants us to fall into, especially as His people whom He blesses constantly.

Daniel, once more, stands as a model worth studying and learning from. His response to God giving him divine insight into the content of King Nebuchadnezzar's troubling dream is chock-full of what you should say and do when God blesses the proverbial socks off you. Class is in session in chapter two, verse nineteen of the book of Daniel. Our teacher helps us move toward the ten percent bracket with a Socratic question:

When God Blesses You Do You Bless Him? (Daniel 2:19-30)

Really. When is the last time you purposefully stopped the car of your life and said, "Thanks Lord for making a way for me. Thanks for not leaving me hopelessly sidelined. Thanks for giving me a much needed and timely break"? Here's an observation which is probably true at this moment. You are thinking, right now, of a situation, an event, a problem, a person in which you watched the hand of God move in a profound, loving fashion; however, you blush because you, for various rationalizations, failed to show divine gratitude. Instead of letting the opportunity to raise your hand to say "Thanks" to God, why not do that at the end of this particular study?

Daniel sets the pace for us. He didn't just wave his hand one time in a cool (California) manner, he rolled his window down at the first light, turned down the stereo, and let God know exactly how he felt about the divine magnanimity he witnessed. We catch this driver in action with the first shot from the literary camera situated in the busy intersection. It's called ...

The Reality of Blessing (Daniel 2:19)

The Hebrew here is so powerful:

¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven;

אֲדִין לְדַנְיָאֵל בְּחֻזָּא דִּי־לִילְיָא רַזָּה נְלִי

Hold it right there. Reading from right to left, the opening word isn't the customary verb but an adverbial conjunction. Grammatically, this is highly emphatic, as if he is yelling with joy. To paraphrase young Daniel, "I prayed with my three buddies for God to be merciful to us in relation to helping us with identifying the components and interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's mysterious dream, and God answered by means of high definition, 3840 x 2160 vision floating in the middle of the dark night air. Wow. No. Make that 'Todah.'"

God does hear the prayer of His people. Believe it.

¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. ¹⁶ The face of the LORD is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth. ¹⁷ The righteous cry, and the LORD hears And delivers them out of all their troubles (Psalm 34).

It doesn't get any clearer than this. Doesn't matter if you are a young twenty-year-old as a captive in a foreign country, or an older person in a convalescent care facility, God will hear and act in your behalf when you pray, as James say, in accordance with the will of God.

Think of Jeremiah. During his second prison experience for being courageous enough to be the lone voice of moral and spiritual truth to his decadent and deceived nation, he prayed and God responded in a jaw-dropping fashion:

¹ Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the second time, while he was still confined in the court of the guard, saying, ² "Thus says the LORD who made the earth, the LORD who formed it to establish it, the LORD is His name, ³ 'Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' ⁴ "For thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah which are broken down to make a defense against the siege ramps and against the sword, ⁵ 'While they are coming to fight with the Chaldeans and to fill them with the corpses of men whom I have slain in My anger and in My wrath, and I have hidden My face from this city because of all their wickedness: ⁶ 'Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth. ⁷ 'I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel and will rebuild them as they were at first (Jeremiah 33).

With the Babylonians literally at the gates of Jerusalem, God whispered to Jeremiah to pray to Him and He promised to answer him in a profound fashion, and he did. To read the rest of the chapter is to encounter one of the greatest prophecies about Israel's return to the land after the seventy year captivity (how could Jeremiah have known unless God told him?), followed ultimately by the coming and establishment of the Davidic Messiah's kingdom of universal peace and righteousness (Jeremiah 33:14-26).

The prayer principle is clear: You pray and then God works in your life in a powerful fashion. As James teaches us, to paraphrase "we have not because we ask not" (James 4:2). God waits to do spectacular things as you face a complex situation yet you must pray with faith, as Daniel and his friends did. God gave them a vision. The Hebrew word, *hezu* (הִזָּן) typically denotes a supernatural, divinely ordered view of something unknown to mankind (Ezekiel 1:5, 16, 26-28; 8:2; 40:3; Daniel 2:19, 28; 4:5, 9, 10, 13; 7:2, 7, 13, 15). God is probably not going to employ this technique in our age of grace since we have the Word of God; however, He will employ some unique method to answer your query. I must say, I cannot even begin to name how many times illumination in a particular situation came after reading the Scriptures. When, not if, it happens, you just know He has spoken in relation to your prayer. As that point you must stop and give Him praise. Do you? Will you?

This is what Daniel and his friends did. They prayed for divine mercy, God answered and they turned and blessed Him. The word to bless, *barak* (בָּרַךְ) literally means to fall to your knees¹, so this probably suggests what these young men did as they thanked God. They didn't have their hands in their pockets. Far from it. They hit the floor in adoration of the presence and power of God Almighty who had His eye on the likes of them ... young Jewish captives in a faraway, godless land. His eye is on you, too. He's also working in your life as you pray to Him. Perhaps it's time for you to get down to ground level with God when you witness the reality of His rich blessing on your life.

What do you do when you are down there? Daniel specifically praised “the God of heaven.” In Hebrew, the preposition *le* (לְ) is affixed to the front of the name of God. Grammatically, this can be classified as the directive use of the preposition, meaning Daniel probably knelt down (*barak*) and looked up toward the heavens of God's abode. This isn't God as part of the heavens as in polytheism, but who is above and beyond them, really Lord and Creator over them. This is the first inkling that Daniel's prayer of gratitude is going to be intently and purposefully focused on the great character of the God who gave him the precise revelation. Makes you ask yourself, Which names do I employ when I bless the God who works in and through my life?

Moving from the general to the particular in the ensuing verses, Daniel's prayer of divine blessing teaches us all about what I would call ...

The Road of Blessing (Daniel 2:20-23)

God has communicable attributes He has shared with us at our creation (viz., intellectual, moral, and volitional)², and then He possesses incommunicable attributes He cannot bestow upon us for they are intrinsic to His divined status.

Focus On His Wisdom (20a).

²⁰ Daniel said, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him.

The last clause “for wisdom and power belong to Him” lacks a verb. This is called ellipsis and according to Bullinger it is purposefully designed “in order that we may not stop to think of, or

¹ S. R. Driver and Charles A Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon*, ed. Francis Brown (Lafayette, Indiana: Associated Publishers and Authors, INC, 1981), 1085: [בָּרַךְ] **vb. kneel, bless** (so BH);—**Pe. Pt. 1. act.** עַל-בְּרָכֹהֵי דָנִיֵּאל Dn 6:11 *kneeling on his knees* (in prayer). **2. pass.** בְּרִיךְ Dn 3:28 *blessed* (be) the God, etc. **Pa. bless, praise:** *Pf.* 3 ms. בָּרַךְ 2:19, 1 s. בְּרַכָּה (K^{39.3}) 4:31, both c. ל of God; *Pt. pass.* מְבָרַךְ 2:20 the name of God (be) *blessed*.

² Elwell, Walter A., and Barry J. Beitzel. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988) 878.

lay stress on, the word omitted, but may dwell on the other words which are thus emphasised by the omission.”³ Here, Daniel wants us to reflect on the importance of God’s wisdom.

What does wisdom mean in reference to God? Norman Geisler gives us helpful insight:

Since God is infinite and wise, He must be infinitely wise: This is called omniscience. So applied to God, wisdom refers to His unerring ability to choose the best means to accomplish the best ends. As such, God’s wisdom is rooted in several other attributes: His omniscience provides the knowledge for His wise choices; His omnibenevolence assures that they will be good choices; and His omnipotence enables Him to achieve His ends by the means He chooses.⁴

Our wisdom in God’s ways grows as we submit to His leadership and learn from His Word. Such is not the case with God. He is always the essence of wisdom, in any given situation, and needs not know any additional information in order to make a completely wise and perfect decision. This is why we read in the Old Testament how His acts are always wise:

²⁴ O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions (Psalm 104).

¹⁹ The LORD by wisdom founded the earth, By understanding He established the heavens (Proverbs 3).

God never has a situation where He looks back and says to Himself, as we do, “I probably shouldn’t have done that in light of how that went.” On the contrary, His perfective wisdom never has any leakage and never has to learn.

While in Pennsylvania the other day interviewing candidates, we had the opportunity to stop by the Little League World Series complex. I had dreamed about this since I was a child. Just to stand in the parking lot on the side of that hill and look out over the empty field and stadium was a numinous, moving experience, to say the least.

Within a few seconds, Darren had walked down the wet, somewhat frosty grass at an angle to get a close-up view of the field and to take once in a lifetime pictures. I eye-balled the steep nature of the hill and thought the descent looked pretty tenuous. When Darren walked over the massive statue of Casey at the Bat near the scoreboard, I just had to join him.

Moving down at an angle with my backpack secured over my shoulders and my I Phone in my hand, I started picking up unwanted speed. Within a few seconds my legs were moving faster than I have ever moved, and I had absolutely no way to stop myself. I remember whizzing by the shocked Darren. Once I came to a stop, I was able to really enjoy the field up close.

I looked in the distance after a few shots, and noticed Darren going back up the steep, wet, somewhat frozen slope. From ground level I couldn’t believe how steep that hill really was. I remember thinking to myself, “Do go up that way. Head down to the staircase at the end of complex itself. It’s safer.” But then my competitive voice kicked in, “If Darren can do you, you can do it.” That was probably the voice of the Devil.

³ E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1968), 1.

⁴ Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House), 213.

Heading up I couldn't believe the grade. Approaching the top, which had an even steeper slope to it, I had to get low to the ground to make the final crest. I remember when the grass gave way beneath my left foot. I shot down that hill on all fours like a rocket, and when I hit the bottom gravity and inertia kicked in and tossed me through the air like a rag doll. I hit the ground and rolled multiple times with the backpack and phone firmly in place. Darren never heard my initial cries for help. He did, however, break into air-sucking laughter when he saw me walk toward him later from the staircase area.

God would have never made that mistake because His wisdom would have not permitted it. We, however, are, well, a work in progress. We tend to learn about wise living after we've raced down and then slide down the dangerous slope called life.

I don't know about you, but I'm glad God is all-wise.

Applied to Daniel's situation one can readily see why he started his praise with this facet of God's wonderful character. Even though he was a captive, his nation was leveled by his enemies, he had to learn the ways of his captors, and now he faced certain death for the inability of the king's advisors to interpret a mysterious dream (as lame as that probably seemed), he rested on and trusted in the wisdom of the living God that this seemingly unfair and potentially deadly scenario was what had to happen in God's scheme of things in order to carry out His mysterious purposes for Israel ... and mankind.

The same applies to you in your complex, threatening, unfair, and unjust situation. God's wisdom is behind it and is guiding it; therefore you should be praying for his assistance as you go through it, and when He brings it to a consummation, be what it may, you must bow in thankful adoration that this is the wisest of all divine conclusions ... even if you do not fully understand God's inner workings.

When's the last time you thanked God for showing wisdom for how He has led your life? He's waiting to hear from you.

In addition to extoling the wisdom of God, Daniel next logically turned to ...

Focus On His Power (20b) The Hebrew for power is from the word *gebar* (גבר), which is typically employed in the Old Testament to great warriors in Israel. For instance, it is used of David's physically powerful (one soldier named Eznite slew 800 men in one battle by himself; 2 Samuel 23:8) and brave elite mighty men in 1 Chronicles 11:15-19 and in 2 Samuel 23:8-16. God, logically is, in Daniel's mind, the prototype of the ultimate spiritual warrior (Psalm 106:8; 145:4, 11, 12) for he is capable of taking on the weak gods (read "demons") and defeating them, as in this situation.

Divine omnipotence simply means God has unlimited power at His disposal, and His power, even when it is used, is never used up to any degree. It stays at a perfect level perpetually. Further, as Geisler notes, "Theologically, 'omnipotent' means that God can do whatever is possible to do. Or, God can do what is not impossible to do. His power is unlimited and uninhibited by anything else. Negatively, omnipotence does not mean that God can do what is contradictory. The Scriptures affirm that God cannot contradict His nature (Hebrews 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:13; Titus 1:2)."⁵ God, therefore, cannot do the impossible like use His power to create square circles, or do something contrary to His intrinsic, eternal nature; however, His power knows no bounds for all other pursuits with the running the cosmos and fulfilling His lofty purposes are concerned.

⁵ Geisler, Systematic Theology, vol. 2, 159.

His power, also, logically follows His wisdom for one could be all-wise but without being all-powerful they would be incapable of executing what their wisdom suggests. Coupled with the fact He is omnibenevolent, viz., all-good, His ability to bring to fruition the best possible outcome dictated by His perfect wisdom is never thwarted. You might need to read that one more and let it sink into your soul.

Daniel and his friends could have easily bought into the philosophical argument against God's existence in their less than ideal ... even evil ... situation presented to them:

1. An all-good God would defeat evil.
2. An all-powerful God can defeat evil.
3. But evil is not defeated;
4. Hence, there can be no such God.⁶

The answer to this supposedly air-tight argument is really pretty simple and it's based on the full character of God:

1. If God is all-good, He would defeat evil.
2. If God is all-powerful, he could defeat evil.
3. But evil is not yet defeated.
4. Therefore, evil will one day be defeated.⁷

Testy situations Daniel found himself in, and tough ones you might be in currently, will one day find their solution based on the complete character of God. A God is who is all-wise and all-powerful can, and will, by definition, fulfill His purposes for all of us without question. And just because we, like Daniel, can't see what He is doing with our limited thinking, doesn't mean He isn't arduously and strategically working in ways we cannot comprehend nor anticipate. The point is, then, will you trust this all-wise God with and for your life? Beyond this, will you praise Him as He works in the complexity of your given life situation?

A third area to praise and bless God for logically follows the two we have just considered:

Focus On His Providence (21). This is most exciting theologically, philosophically, and pragmatically:

²¹ "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.

The opening clause is a waw (pronounced vav, like the German "w") disjunctive in Hebrew (וַ) because the conjunction "and" is attached at the beginning the sentence to a personal pronoun (or non-verb). Grammatically and rhetorically it serves as a major speedbump to arrest your attention. It's as if Daniel takes you by the shoulders and says emphatically, "Don't forget to

⁶ Norman Geisler, *If God, Why Evil?* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2011), 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

praise God for His absolute providence over all things.” Providence comes from the Latin *pro* (before) and *video* (sight or foresight). Theologically, A.A. Hodge defines it well: “A careful arrangement prepared beforehand for the accomplishment of God’s predetermined ends⁸ ... Providence is that continuous agency of God by which he makes all the events of the physical and moral universe fulfill the original design with which he created it.”⁹ The basis of His providence is His goodness, underscoring he desires good for all things; His omniscience, underscoring He truly knows all things perfectly; His wisdom, underscoring He knows the most logical way to arrive at the most supreme end for all things; and His omnipotence, underscoring He is more than capable of performing and executing what needs to be accomplished to fulfill His goals and to ultimately deal with the problem of evil.

God providence extends to the natural world, and logically so:

“He moves the mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in His anger. He shakes the earth from its place” (Job 9:5-6).

“He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45).

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ... yet even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (Matthew 6:27).

Daniel had great, inexorable faith in God even in captivity for He knew the same God who controlled all the weather and the animals in Israel, was the same God in control of the same things in Babylon. He knew God’s providence was perfect.

Most assuredly, Daniel had been schooled in the providence of God from his exposure to the Holy Scriptures which states this definitively:

“He makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperses them” (Job 12:23).

“The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases” (Proverbs 21:1).

God, who is all-good, all-wise, all-powerful is providentially guiding all events of the nations to ultimately accomplish His purposes, despite the evil things they do and allow. He permits them to freely act the way they do so He can one day ultimately defeat evil and erect His kingdom of perfect righteousness. His omniscience gives Him the ability to know what His free creatures will do, whether they are a politician or a housewife, and He merely adjusts His plan to work their free decisions into what He is doing in the long run.

Based on his understanding of God’s providential power, Daniel did not worry when Arioch knocked at his door with the execution squad. No, he knew God had His providential hand on this, completely. He knew that King Nebuchadnezzar reigned because God permitted it. He, also, knew the king had this disturbing dream based on God’s providence. Knowing this

⁸ A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, 262

⁹ A.A. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 419.

about God, therefore, made him bold. He knew that an all-wise God had this and had a plan for him, as well as one for the nations. He knew that an all-powerful God had this and could easily bring His holy plan to fruition, despite the exploits of earthly rulers. He, also, knew that God's providence and providential plan extended to from the king, to the head execution, on down to the most insignificant Babylonian. That's why He prayed with such faith. That's why He blessed this kind of God.

Stop for a moment. With the death of Chief Justice Antonin Scalia over a week ago now, many conservative Christians are worried about what the liberal progressive government will do next. With a Supreme Court ruled by judges who don't hold to Christian values, then anything is possible, or so goes the reasoning. Hold on. Daniel's God is your God. Do you believe it? Mr. Scalia's death was ordained by God who is working a providential plan to defeat evil and to usher in His kingdom of peace and righteousness. Instead of worrying, start praising God for guiding even this sad national scenario

I'm concerned we get too worked up, whether we are conservative or liberal, with the things of this world while forgetting who God is. He is everything Daniel blessed Him for and then some. When will you really start trusting Him? When will you really start joyously blessing Him for what He's doing in your life, family, nation, and world?

The last facet of God's character Daniel couldn't help but mention in a prayer of blessing is His limitless understanding of anything and everything:

Focus On His Omniscience (22-23). Astrophysics scientists are exuberant because they've recently discovered, through painstaking research, the cosmic gravitational waves from the Big Bang predicted by Albert Einstein over 100-years ago. The laser interferometer gravitational-wave observatory, or LIGO, picked up the waves produced by the collision of two massive black holes supposedly billions of years ago to most likely form our cosmos as we know it. This is an amazing discovery, and it remains to be seen how they apply the data to cosmology. But what is most interesting is mankind intelligence was just taken to a whole new level, and such is how his mind is constructed. It is ever learning as it investigates, studies, theorizes and so forth.

Such is not the nature of God, as Daniel states emphatically:

²² "It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. ²³ "To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power; even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, for You have made known to us the king's matter."

Writing about the omniscience of God, A.W. Tozer offers these insightful conclusions:

God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter in all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, both being in every being, or creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality in all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell. Because God knows all things perfectly, he knows nothing

better than any other thing, and all things equally well. He never discovers anything, he's never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing men out for their own good) does he seek information or ask questions.¹⁰

I'd dare say with a God like this, why are we anxious? Further, with a God like, why aren't we more courageous for Him? Finally, with a God like this, HOW CAN WE NOT BLESS HIM WHEN HE BLESSES US?

¹⁰ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper, 1978), 62-63.