The Lord Gives Wisdom to His Faithful People

Daniel 1:17-21

Good morning. Would you please open your Scriptures to the book of Daniel chapter 1. Today we will be discussing verses 17-21 which is the account of what God did for Daniel and his friends after the refused to eat the food of the king due to their desire to be faithful to the Law of God. Over the past few weeks, we have been looking at the life of Daniel and his friends after they were taken into captivity to Babylon. This took place because the Kingdom of Judah has forgotten God and were not abiding by the covenant, they made with Him. Because of their unfaithfulness God punished them with a 70-year exile in Babylon, which would make up for all of the years they had not remembered to keep the sabbath day. Last week we learned that when God’s faithful people stand up for the faith that God will equip them with the tools they need to serve Him. Now today we will see that God will also provide His faithful people with the wisdom needed to conduct themselves honorably. Please read with me Daniel 1:17-21 **“And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every kind of literature and expertise; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams. 18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; so they entered the king’s personal service. 20 As for every matter of expertise and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the soothsayer priests and conjurers who were in all his realm. 21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.”**

As we begin today’s passage, we are told that because of their faithfulness the men are endowed with knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge in this context is human reason and the ability to read texts to decipher the meaning of what is written. These men had the ability to understand the literature of the Babylonians and to decipher what was being written. The other gift they are given is wisdom which is the ability to understand things above the minds of men. We see this being the case because the verse also records that Daniel was given the ability to understand visions and dreams. No man who has ever lived has had this ability because it is only God who knows what visions are in the minds of men and what their dreams may be. God blessed the men with this knowledge and wisdom because they first stood firm in their faith despite what it may have cost them. What is going to eventually be a problem for Daniel and his friends is that the gifts God gave them are going to put them at odds with the magicians and sorcerers who were already serving the king. This would result in a jealousy that the king’s advisors would have a hard time taming. When we get to the later chapters of Daniel when he is thrown into the lion’s den, we will see the extreme measures they are willing to take to silence him.

It is appropriate while we are discussing Daniel to also mention another man in Israelite history who was given the ability to interpret dreams, this was of course Joseph who was the son of Jacob. What Daniel and Joseph had in common was their sincerity in serving God because when they are acknowledged for having this gift of dream interpretation both of them are quick to remind the kings that they are not the ones who are doing the work, but it is God who knows all things and has given them the ability. In the lives of both Joseph and Daniel God will show His power in both of these men and the wisdom they had surpassed anything that the advisors of the kings were able to do. Just like Aaron’s staff turned into a snake and ate up the snakes of Pharaohs magicians, the wisdom of God is greater than any wisdom that can come from man.

In verse 18 we see that when the training of the men had been completed, they were presented before the king for inspection. I can only imagine how nervous the men had to be at this meeting because they had been groomed for three years to be prepared for this interaction. These three years of learning were most likely very intense because a Babylonian education included the subjects of history, religion, literature, and a study of the laws and culture of the nation. The Chaldean people were a very old nation and therefore they had a lot of literature and history to learn. Not only was their language unique as well as their cuneiform writing, they practiced a polytheistic religion where there were hundreds of gods that were worshipped and were expected to provide for the people in many different ways. Daniel and his three friends would have been introduced to this new pagan religion and would have had to endure learning about the false gods of the land. They were examined and found to be prepared to meet the king for his final approval so that they could serve in his council.

The meeting takes place in verse 19. After the discussion that happens the king concludes that the men from Judah surpassed all of the other students in knowledge and wisdom. Let’s take a moment to look carefully at what this verse says about their abilities. We are told that no one was able to match these men meaning that they had been given a level of skill that could not be matched. We know that the Scripture has already said that the men had been blessed by God with these abilities, but what is really amazing is that we learn so much about God in this situation. When we look at Scripture as a whole, we see that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 9:10). It is impossible to have true wisdom and not have a proper fear of the Lord, so we find here that Daniel and his friends had wisdom that had come from God and they had it because they had a proper fear of God which means that they respected Him. Not only is the fear of God where wisdom begins, but we see other people in Scripture seeking wisdom from the Lord because they knew His wisdom is greater than can come from any man. King Solomon asked for wisdom when God offered him anything that he wanted and we also see the Apostles praying that Jesus would bless them with the words to reach the lost.

Another point we can make about this wisdom coming from God is that it is allowing these men to accomplish things that they could not do on their own. Matthew Henry in his commentary makes the argument that these men received wisdom from God for two reasons. The first reason is because they were recovering something that was replacing what they had previously lost. Since they were taken away from their homes and families, God gave them wisdom and discernment to replace what they had lost. A second reason they received this wisdom is because they were being rewarded for their faithfulness in Him. God has said in His Word that He is with those who love and honor Him. In Ecclesiastes 2:26 we read **“For to a person who is good in His sight, He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God’s sight. This too is futility and striving after wind.”** We see that those who are faithful towards God can expect to receive wisdom and knowledge from Him.

Continuing to verse 20 we see that the other soothsayers (those who predict the future using magic) and the conjurers (magicians that attempt to contact spirits) were not able to match the level of wisdom that Daniel and his friends had attained. What we learn from the example of these young men is that when we are faced with a dilemma where we have to decide whether to go the way of the world or the way of God we can be confident that when we follow God’s ways we will experience the peace that only He can provide and we also will have the joy in our lives that only He can provide. These young men had a level of success that no one else enjoyed, so they knew that God was with them.

Finally in verse 21 we read that Daniel will remain in the service for three different Kings. He will serve during Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and finally Cyrus. God gives him a long life where he not only has the opportunity to serve the kings, but he will be given visions of the future and will eventually get to see the day that Cyrus will order for the Jews to be allowed to return Jerusalem. He had a long life and God was with him the entire way.

Let us conclude our time together today and look at how these gifts of wisdom and knowledge for Daniel and his friends show us the way we can receive these gifts as well. The first application we have today is that all knowledge and wisdom come from God. When the wisdom of God is compared to that of man, we see that the wisdom of man is of no comparison. In **Proverbs 2:6-10 Solomon writes these words “For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, 8 Guarding the paths of justice, And He watches over the way of His godly ones. 9 Then you will discern righteousness, justice, And integrity, and every good path. 10 For wisdom will enter your heart, And knowledge will be delightful to your soul;”** Wisdom is the gift for those who are faithful to God and who walk in His ways. We see the words of Solomon coming true in the lives of these young men. Wisdom is not only a gift, but it serves as a shield protecting those who love God from evil. When you and I seek wisdom from God and use His Word to guide us we are protected from the attacks of Satan and we are ready to do battle in His name. In James 1:5 the Apostle writes **“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”** God is willing to share His knowledge with all who seek it. We must be willing, however, to ask for it. We serve a God who not only is the source of wisdom, but He is willing to share it with all who seek it. This is truly and gracious and loving God.

Our second application today is that no matter what situation we might find ourselves in, God will use us to make Himself known. Daniel and his friends were willing to be used for His purposes, so this shows us that if we make ourselves available, He will use us to teach others the truth. I would like to share with you a few ways that you and I can do this in our daily lives. The first way we can be available to share God’s truth with others is share our personal testimony with those who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. The Psalmist in **Psalm 66:16** writes **“Come and hear, all who fear God,**

**And I will tell of what He has done for my soul.”** The Psalmist wants to share with all who will listen what God has done for him so that others may benefit from his experience. **Also, in Psalm 145:4 we read “One generation will praise Your works to another, And will declare Your mighty acts.”** When we share what God has done in our lives with our children, they will learn how powerful God is and He can do the same thing for them.

A second way we can be available to share the truth of God with others is when we offer to pray for them and with them. One of the most rewarding experiences a Christian can have is when they offer to pray with someone else who is struggling or who is in need of wisdom. I am yet to meet anyone who has refused to let me pray with them. It is a great way to bring people together and see the wisdom of God. In 1 Timothy 2:1-2 the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy these words **“First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made in behalf of all people, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”** Praying with and for others results in a peaceful and tranquil life for all involved. When we are willing to be used in this manner God can work wonders in both our lives as well as theirs.

A third way we can be used to share God’s truth is by living our faith by example for others to follow. In Luke 12:8-9 Jesus said **“Now I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before people, the Son of Man will also confess him before the angels of God; but the one who denies Me before people will be denied before the angels of God.”** There is a reward for those who are willing to live their life in devotion to God without being embarrassed. Jesus wanted His disciples to know that when they live out their faith for others to follow they are helping others to see the truth and bringing them the hope of the gospel that they so badly need in their lives. So, if we are willing to be used by God He can share His truth with others and lead them to a saving relationship with Him.

Our final application today from this passage comes from verse 21 which tells us that Daniel served until the first year of the reign of Cyrus. God blessed Daniel with a long enough life that he was able to see the deliverance of the Jews from exile. This teaches us that God will stay with those who are faithful to His name and He will sustain them as throughout their lives. The Apostle Paul encouraged the Christians in Galatians 6:9 with these words **“Let’s not become discouraged in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not become weary.”** Living in a way that honors God will result in a life that will reap a reward. Even though you and I might not see the results of our work while we are here on earth we can rest assured that He will reward those who persevere through difficulty. Just like Daniel, if you and I are willing to live our lives in devotion to God and are willing to be used for His purposes we can expect that at some point there will be a reward for faithfulness. That is such great news and a reason for us to have joy in our hearts.

As we conclude the message today let us take the account of Daniel and his friends to heart. We serve a God who is always faithful to His people. He will give us what we need to live out our faith in Him, He will use us if we are willing to be used and He will reward us if we remain obedient. No other manmade faith can make such claims and we have the truth of God’s Word to show us that when we live in faith we have a God who loves us and guides us in His ways.