

A Lesson from the Life of Daniel

“He is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth.”
—***Daniel 6:26,27***

THE SIXTH CHAPTER OF the Book of Daniel records how the prophet, because of his wisdom and prudence, was exalted to a position of great importance in the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. We read in the first few verses that King Darius set one hundred and twenty princes over the kingdom. The *Revised Version* and *Rotherham* translations call them “satraps,” which means a governor of a province. Over these one hundred and twenty provincial governors were set three presidents, or confidential ministers, of whom Daniel was first. To these ministers the provincial governors were to render an account, that the king “should have no damage” or should suffer no loss.

The king became so pleased with Daniel, “because an excellent spirit was in him,” that Daniel “was preferred above the presidents and princes; . . . and

the king thought to set him over the whole realm.” (Dan. 6:3) We are not quite sure that the king acted upon this thought, but it is worthy of note that some of these ancient kings recognized character and merit. This good judgment was shown by Nebuchadnezzar when he recognized Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as servants of the true God and gave them still higher positions in the empire.—chap. 3:30

Belshazzar also took no offense at Daniel’s interpretation of the writing on the wall, but highly honored and rewarded him for his faithful, plain, and outspoken words. (chap. 5:29) When Darius of the Medes and Persians overcame Babylon, far from destroying all the rulers, including Daniel, he apparently spared all except the king, and gave Daniel a very high position in the empire. Doubtless, as Daniel was a prophet, the providence of God was also in this, but the king manifestly appreciated his good qualities.

Holding such an exalted office as one of the three presidents of the empire, Daniel no doubt stood in the way of many who sought office. Additionally, as a man of unimpeachable character, he would be in a position to defeat many schemes for personal enrichment and advancement, for those eastern countries were noted for plundering and dishonesty. Thus, Daniel was sure to have made many secret enemies who would seek his downfall. From the narrative, it appears that these enemies, many of whom were prominent in official life, had watched in vain to find some real cause of complaint. They finally concluded that if fault would be found at all, it must be because of his religion. The testimony of his enemies was, “We shall not find any occasion

against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.”—chap. 6:5

RIGHTEOUS PERSECUTED

We are reminded here of the words of Jesus in John 3:19: “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” Later, as recorded in John 15:19, he told his disciples, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Paul gives a similar testimony in II Timothy 3:12: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

It has been truly said, “Whosoever does well and is faithful and true, while others are dishonest and false, must expect to be opposed and hated; every effort will be made to injure his character and drag him into the mire, and to make it appear that he is no better than those who assail him.” This was certainly true in the case of Daniel. The enemies who sought his ruin were indeed filled with the spirit of Satan, whose schemes and plans seemed to come naturally to them.

Very cunningly they counseled the king that the people should recognize his exalted position. Relying on the law of the Medes and Persians, under which no decree that the king had established could be altered or set aside, these plotters succeeded in having the king appoint thirty days in which it would be considered a crime to offer a petition to any person or god other than Darius himself.

It is highly improbable that the king had so false an idea of his own personal importance, or that the officers believed him to be infallible. It was, rather, a matter which they suggested as a piece of statecraft, a fraud upon the people. It was justified, in their perverted judgment, on the grounds of national peace and security. In other words, it would help to impose a desirable restraint upon the masses. This has its counterpart in the principle behind the teaching of certain false doctrines, such as eternal torment. Many intelligent preachers disbelieve this teaching. However, they do not discourage a belief in hell-fire on the part of their hearers, on the principle that a falsehood is justified if beneficial results are hoped to come from it.

ENEMIES HAPPY

Having obtained the king's signature to the new law, the conspirators exulted in the thought that Daniel was at last in their grasp and, in their mind, already practically destroyed. They knew his character so well as to have no doubt that he would be faithful to his religious convictions, and thus furnish them with the opportunity to bring about his downfall. In this they were quite correct, for the account says, "He went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." (Dan. 6:10) It was part of his habit of life to open the window towards Jerusalem and kneel before his God in prayer and thanksgiving.

There is a lesson we can draw from this for ourselves. Psalm 95:6 reads, "O come, let us worship

and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.” A comment on this from *Daily Heavenly Manna* reads, “It is impossible for any Christian to maintain a proper, consistent walk in life, and to build up such a character and faith structure as are represented by the apostle as composed of ‘gold, silver and precious stones’ without prayer; more than this, without regularity in prayer—we would almost be inclined to say, without kneeling in prayer.”

A proper reverential attitude toward our Heavenly Father prompts us in our private devotions to bow down and kneel “before the Lord our maker.” In the busy turmoil of life, to kneel is not always possible, and we must learn to pray even when we cannot kneel in prayer. It has been said that prayer is thinking toward God. Ephesians 5:19 speaks of “making melody in your heart to the Lord,” and this can be done in many everyday situations. When walking along the street we can think toward God, or when waiting in traffic we can think toward God. Prayer is doing everything as for him, and if our mental prayer covers all our daily activities we can indeed “Pray without ceasing.”—I Thess. 5:17

We are not told why Daniel had adopted the habit of private worship in so public a manner as to be generally known to the people. This is a manner quite different from that which Jesus commended to his followers during this age. “Whenever you pray, go into your own room and shut the door; then pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father, he who sees in secret, will recompense you.” (Matt. 6:6, *Weymouth Translation*) Probably, the custom of Babylon was such as to make Daniel’s more open course the reasonable and proper one.

The heathen worship around him was more or less public and visible, and Daniel was not ashamed to let it be known that he turned his face toward Jerusalem, the typical city of God. It illustrated his faithfulness to the true God and his separation from idolatry. He was not satisfied just to close his eyes in prayer after he had retired to rest. He realized that he had a great God who was worthy of reverence and worship. He appreciated that it was a privilege to have communion and fellowship with his Creator.

We, too, recognize that it is a wonderful privilege to worship the God of heaven. We have additionally been granted the wonderful favor of looking to him and addressing him as our Father. We are also encouraged to come to him in time of need.—Heb. 4:15,16

Jesus gave us the formula for successful prayer when he said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (John 15:7) The Apostle John added, “This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”—I John 5:14

According to a prearranged plan, the conspirators assembled at the proper time to witness Daniel’s devotion. They then went to the king to announce that the first one to disobey his decree, and therefore to come under its punishment, was the honored and trusted first minister of the empire, Daniel. They reminded the king that he had said that any man who made a petition to any god or man other than himself should be cast into a den of lions. When the king realized that he had been flattered

into making this decree for the very purpose of destroying his most valued counselor, he was “sore displeased with himself,” and he “set his heart on Daniel to deliver him.”—Dan. 6:14

The king sought every possible way to make void the decree, or to excuse Daniel from its penalty. However, the conspirators were close at hand with their arguments to prove that such a course was quite impossible. “Know, O king,” they said, “that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.” (vs. 15) Darius could find no way of escape. His decree must stand, so he commanded that Daniel be brought and cast into the den of lions. Daniel’s conduct at all times had been noticed and had such an effect on the king that he could express the hope, “Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. (vs. 16) He knew that Daniel worshipped God sincerely and trusted him implicitly, and this so impressed him that he had hope that the God whom Daniel served might somehow deliver him.

Daniel’s life testified not only to his own faithfulness and character, but also to the faithfulness and character of the God he worshipped. We are instructed, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16) Our lives should be living epistles. Many of our friends and neighbors know God only as they are able to see and appreciate in us the Christian’s character and manner of life.

Daniel’s enemies were not content with having him cast into the den of lions. They were determined that nothing should thwart their evil designs,

so a stone was laid at the mouth of the den, sealed with the seals of the king and of his lords. These wicked men could not tolerate in their midst one whose life was above reproach, or who had, perhaps, on some occasions prevented them from carrying out other evil plans.

We are not told how Daniel passed the night, but we know in whom he trusted. We are also sure that he could pray as fervently in the lions' den as he could in his own chamber. King Darius was troubled in mind, and his sleep went from him. He passed the night in fasting, and it is evident that Daniel had a more peaceful night in the den than the king had in his bed. Very early in the morning Darius went in haste to the den, and cried, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" The reply came, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me."—Dan. 6:20,22

A "ROARING LION"

We are told in I Peter 5:8 of a peril that threatens Christians: "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Daniel had committed himself to the God whom he served, and this is exactly what we are instructed to do. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (vs. 7) The scripture assures us, "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."—Ps. 34:7

God's restraining power is over everything destructive and hurtful. As God's providence over Daniel permitted him to come under the power of

natural wild beasts, so he sometimes permits his faithful ones now to be exposed to hatred and misrepresentation. This was so in the case of Jesus. He warned his disciples that they would share the same experiences, saying, "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake."—Luke 21:12

To be near Christ was to be near the fire of persecution. The Book of Acts tells us of James, Stephen, Peter, and Paul, and we know of many others at that time and since who suffered and died because of their faith. Peter, writing at a time when much bitter persecution was raging, wrote, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." (I Pet. 4:12,13) "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."—chap. 2:21

God was able to, and did, deliver Daniel. He is also able to send his "angel" to shut the mouths of "lions" who would injure his people now. Paul testified to God's great keeping power, saying, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. 8:38,39

All things are subject to the one whose service we have entered through vows of consecration. In some instances, it may please the Lord to grant a

wonderful deliverance, as in the case of Daniel, while in other cases his providential dealings may result otherwise. He allowed Stephen to be killed by stoning and James to be beheaded by Herod. However, when Peter was in prison awaiting the same fate, an angel was sent to deliver him.

It is God who decides when we shall be delivered and when the enemy shall appear to triumph. We must accept by faith his providence in our lives, being assured that he will grant the necessary strength and grace for every time of need. In the midst of his persecution, Stephen had the peace of God ruling in his heart to such an extent that his face was as the face of an angel. He was calm, serene, and unperturbed, and “he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”—Acts 7:55

We must learn that godliness, uprightness, and virtue do not exempt one from adversities and ills. Indeed, it is frequently the case that the deeper and more complete the devotion and fidelity to God, the greater the trials. All such suffering for righteousness’ sake is helpful in building up a character fitted for eternity. Those used of the Lord to instruct us have stressed that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”—Acts 14:22

GOD’S WILL

To what extent may we look for and expect divine interposition when we are in trouble, trial, or danger? The Scriptures plainly declare that true children of God may confidently look to him for help in time of need. “The steps of a good man are

ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. . . . For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints.” (Ps. 37:23,24,28) “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” (chap. 55:22) Jesus said, “Consider the lilies of the field, . . . if God so clothe the grass of the field, . . . shall he not much more clothe you?” (Matt. 6:28,30) “Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need. . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (vss. 32,33) He also said that God is even mindful of the death of a sparrow, and continued, “Ye are of more value than many sparrows.” (chap. 10:31) The Lord is overruling all the affairs of those who have truly committed themselves to him, and his promise is, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”—Heb. 13:5

GOD’S PURPOSE SERVED

Whenever miracles have been wrought in the deliverance of God’s people, there has always been a divine purpose to be accomplished. That purpose has been the furtherance of his good cause in the world. Daniel was a representative of the true God and had made known, both by his words and his life, the greatness of the God he worshiped. It seemed best to the Lord at this particular time to preserve the life of his servant. His life work was not yet finished. Visions and revelations were to be given him concerning the future. He was to be further used to encourage and stir up his own nation

to go up to the land of their fathers, rebuild their city and Temple, and resume again the worship of Jehovah in the place appointed. This miracle was God's way of witnessing to them that, even in their present captivity to other nations, he was their God and was with them.

After Daniel's deliverance, the king caused all the conspirators to be cast into the den of lions, and they were destroyed. This illustrates a principle of divine justice that those who dig pits for others shall fall into them themselves. "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate."—Ps. 7:15,16

Although it is true that "now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered" (Mal. 3:15), we are assured that in the next age it will be different. Concerning the coming kingdom, the Lord said, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies."—Isa. 28:17

Daniel was so beset by his enemies that there seemed no way of escape from a violent death. However, because of his faithfulness and God's providence he was delivered. The record of Daniel has been written that we may learn valuable lessons respecting God's care and protection of those who put their trust in him alone. King Darius himself stood in awe of the God of Daniel, saying, "He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions." ■