

## 15.02.2020 FROM THE LIONS' DEN TO THE ANGEL'S DEN

***“So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him” Daniel 6:4***

This week's study of the life of the prophet Daniel informs us that, like Daniel, we are called to be:

1. Faithful in service to our earthly masters.
2. Faithful in service to our God.
3. The worship and service of God is our first priority when there is a conflict between our loyalty to our earthly masters and our loyalty to God.

### **Daniel Distinguishes Himself in a New Empire: Daniel 6:1-3**

*It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps (princes), to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors (presidents), of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. Daniel 6:1-3*

Daniel was one of three governors over 120 satraps and was so good at his work that King Darius was considering making him the governor of the entire realm. The Bible tells us why he distinguished himself... *'because an excellent spirit was in him'*. In the previous chapters we were informed that he had an excellent spirit because his spirit was in communication with the Spirit of God.

### **A Jealous Conspiracy: Daniel 6:4-5**

*So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. Then these men said, “We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God.”*

Like Pilate testified of Jesus centuries later, these colleagues of Daniel could find no charge or fault against him not only in his personal life, but in his working life as governor.

There are three lessons we can learn from Daniel's faithful witness to God:

1. Daniel did not limit himself to tasks he was certain he could accomplish on his own steam. Rather, he did his work on a daily basis in dependence on God. Daniel prayed three times a day (6:10). He acknowledged God in every tough issue he faced. We, too, have to recognize we cannot fulfil our callings on our own.
2. Daniel epitomized the call Jesus would later give to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16) in our workplaces. Even Daniel's enemies had to admit, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God” (6:5). This meant that he was able to confront difficult situations with truth, and actually bring about change. This happens several times when Daniel and his friends take a careful stand for the truth and it leads to a new decree by the king (2:46-49; 3:28-30; 4:36-37; 5:29; 6:25-28).
3. Daniel's success in bringing about change demonstrates that God cares about the everyday issues of governance in a broken society. Just because God intends to replace the current regime eventually, doesn't mean He doesn't care about making it more just, more fruitful, more liveable now. Sometimes we don't engage with God in our work because we believe that our work doesn't seem important to God. But each decision is important to our God, and every worker needs to know this. The question that the theology of Daniel presents the worker is, “Whose kingdom are you building?” Daniel excelled in his occupation

labouring on behalf of the world's kingdoms, and he maintained his integrity as a citizen of God's kingdom. His service to the pagan kings was his service for the purposes of God. Christian workers must labour well in the here and now, knowing that the significance of our labour both resides in and transcends the here and now. *From: Theology of Work Bible Commentary.*

'The experience of Daniel as a statesman in the kingdoms of Babylon and Medo-Persia reveals the truth that a businessman is not necessarily a designing, policy man, but that he may be a man instructed by God at every step. Daniel, the prime minister of the greatest of earthly kingdoms, was at the same time a prophet of God, receiving the light of heavenly inspiration. A man of like passions as ourselves, the pen of inspiration describes him as without fault. His business transactions, when subjected to the closest scrutiny of his enemies, were found to be without one flaw. He was an example of what every businessman may become when his heart is converted and consecrated, and when his motives are right in the sight of God.' *Prophets and Kings:p.546*

#### For Reflection:

Am I honest and upright in the place where I am employed? Do I serve my employer as I should serve God?

#### **Appeal to the King's Pride: Daniel 6:6-9**

*So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counsellors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.*

The enemies of Daniel were convinced he would stay loyal to God over the king. So they flattered the king into signing a decree that for 30 days, every request must be made to him. No request could be made to any other human being or to any other god. They also knew that Medo-Persian law could not be annulled or changed (see also Esther 1:19 and 8:8). So they made death in the lions' den the penalty for disobedience.

#### For Reflection:

Are my family, colleagues and friends convinced of my loyalty to God? That He comes first in every aspect of my life?

#### **Daniel Prays: Daniel 6:10**

*Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.*

Undaunted, Daniel went home and knelt and prayed to his God three times a day with his windows open as was his habit from youth. Here his story parallels that of his three friends in Chapter 3. Instead of privately worshipping God to avoid trouble, Daniel continues to make an open confession of his faith.

#### For Reflection:

When a crisis of conscience arises because of a conflict between the law of the State and God's Law, the Christian cannot compromise. He must fearlessly and openly declare his allegiance to God.

#### **The Success of the Conspirators and the King's Chagrin: Daniel 6:11-15**

*So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."*

*And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed." 6:13-15*

All too soon Darius realises that his vanity has endangered the life of his most trusted official, but since the law of the land was irreversible, he had no option but to enforce his decree.

### **Daniel in the Lions' Den: Daniel 6:16-18**

*So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "**Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.**" Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.*

*Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him.*

Such was the witness of Daniel's godly life that not just the Babylonians, but also this Medo-Persian king recognised it. Darius the Mede makes 2 statements as he delivers Daniel to the lions:

1. "Your God whom you serve continually..." – he recognises the quality of Daniel's devotion to his God.
2. "He will deliver you." He recognises the Omnipotence of Daniel's God.

#### For Reflection:

Do those we associate with recognise that God is sovereign in our lives and that we serve Him continually and wholeheartedly? Do they recognise what God is like through our witness?

### **Vindication and Deliverance: Daniel 6:19-23, 28**

*Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel... "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"*

*Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, **because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.**"*

*Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.*

God has promised He will be with us whenever we are persecuted (see also Matthew 5:10-12)

'Heaven is very near those who suffer for righteousness' sake. Christ identifies His interests with the interests of His faithful people; He suffers in the person of His saints, and whoever touches His chosen ones touches Him. The power that is near to deliver from physical harm or distress is also near to save from the greater evil, making it possible for the servant of God to maintain his integrity under all circumstances, and to triumph through divine grace.' *Ibid:p.545*

### **'So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.' 6:28**

#### **Darius Acknowledges the God of Daniel: Daniel 6:25-27**

*Then King Darius wrote:*

*To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.*

*I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.*

*For He is the living God, and steadfast forever. His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth; Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.*

### **The Relevance of Daniel's Faithfulness to us today:**

*Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth... Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. Rev. 13:11, 14, 15.*

*And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb: Revelation 15:2-3*

The time is not far off when the issue of worship will arise once again as it did in the time of Daniel. It is the central issue of the Great Controversy between God and Satan... "Who is worthy of worship?" At that time we will be called to be faithful like Daniel and his friends.

God's faithful people (His remnant) will come under tremendous pressure to compromise with the agents of Satan and to worship 'the beast'; to follow human laws instead of God's law.

Some of the faithful will be granted miraculous deliverance. Others will pay for their faithfulness with their lives. But they will all be a part of that great triumphant group who sing the song of Moses and the Lamb in heaven.

In the great cosmic conflict between Satan and God, Satan will not have the last word. Sin and Death will not have the last word. God will have the last word. His Son has triumphed over the Devil and his works (1 John 3:8); He has destroyed the last enemy, Death (1 Corinthians 15:26).

*If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:32*

*Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry." Hebrews 10:35-37*

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