

LESSONS FROM DANIEL: A MAN OF GREAT COURAGE [4]

INTRODUCTION: In this lesson, we shall study the event in Daniel's life for which he is best known – the lion's den. Some children can tell you who was thrown into the lion's den, but only a few can tell you **WHY** he was cast into the den. We often miss valuable lessons because we emphasize the effect, but overlook the cause. (Example: I asked an adult class, "What made the wise man wise and the foolish man foolish?" They didn't know! Do you? Mt. 7:24-27) We shall study why Daniel disobeyed King Darius and was, therefore, thrown into the lion's den. He was "probably over 90" at this time. (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 345) In Ezekiel, a contemporary prophet in captivity with Daniel, the Lord gives Daniel as an example of righteousness and wisdom. (Ezek. 14:14,20; 28:3)

I. LET US CONSIDER THE EVENTS THAT LED UP TO DANIEL'S DELIBERATE DISOBEDIENCE TO KING DARIUS (Dan.6)

A. Daniel was the victim of envy

1. He was the king's favorite among the presidents (vs. 1 -3)
2. His enemies couldn't find "*any error or fault...in him*" (vs. 4)
 - a. What a tribute to Daniel's purity of life!
 - b. He reminds me of Jesus (Jn. 8:46; 18:38; 19:4,6; Mt. 26:59-61)
 - c. Political power didn't corrupt Daniel. His politics were regulated by his faith in God. Religion and politics can mix if one has a very strong faith

B. Because of envy, they devised a wicked plan which involved a making of a law they knew Daniel would not keep (vs. 5-9)

1. Envy caused them to lie for they said, "All the presidents of the kingdom..." (vs. 7)
2. "Envy is excited by the sight of superior goodness in others...Envy is laborous in the search after others sins...Envy seeks to gain its end by the most discreditable methods. It matters little to Envy whether she speaks the language of truth or of falsehood; whether she employs just or unjust measures...No tender or humane feeling can dwell in the same breast as Envy... Envy, when developed to maturity, becomes red-handed murder." (*Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 13, pp.201,202)
3. Envy caused Joseph to be sold into slavery and Jesus to be crucified (Acts 7:9; Mt. 27:18)
4. Envy will keep us out of heaven! (Gal. 5:19-21)
5. Envy is caused by a lack of love for others; for if we love them, we wouldn't envy them

II. DANIEL'S DELIBERATE DISOBEDIENCE IS AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF COURAGEOUS FAITH DERIVED THROUGH PRAYER. (vs. 10)

A. Daniel's disobedience was deliberate – "*Now when Daniel knew...*"

B. He was not ashamed for others to see him praying. Are you?

1. We shouldn't pray just to be seen, but we shouldn't be ashamed of being seen when we pray (Mt. 6:5; example: Do you pray when you eat at a restaurant?) Acts 27:35
2. He prayed toward the "*holy city*" – Jerusalem (I Kgs. 8:27-30)

C. He showed humility by kneeling to pray

1. I don't believe that one has to kneel to pray, but humility of words and posture must accompany our prayers if we want God to hear them
2. God will not accept the prayers of those who pray with their "nose turned up" (Lk. 18:9-14)

D. He was a man of prayer. He prayed from this position 3 times a day

1. He didn't permit his great earthly success to cause him to forget God as so many have done. He didn't turn aside to gather the golden apples and miss the crown of life (Lk. 8:14,15)
 2. He didn't permit the ungodliness of the heathen to turn his heart from God
 3. He didn't become so involved with his duties as president that he failed to find time to pray
 4. How often do you pray? What is your excuse for not praying more often?
 5. Every strong, faithful Christian is a praying Christian!
- E. He "gave thanks before his God"
1. Prayers, which are filled with petitions, but not expressions of gratitude come from a selfish heart (Phil. 4:6; Col. 3:15,17)
 2. God was very real and personal to Daniel – "*his God*". Is He to you?
- F. Daniel was in the habit of praying every day. He was determined, that the new law with its terrible consequence, would not interfere with his prayer life
1. Daniel could have thought to himself:
 - a. "I know I should pray to God, but I will lose my life and my material wealth so I will just wait 30 days."
 - b. "I will pray to God, but I will do it so no one will see me."
 - c. "If I die, what good will I be to the children of God?"
 2. Daniel did not so reason. He was a lion-like man and scorned to lower his standards in the presence of the enemy
 3. He would rather die than displease God!
 4. What would you have done? Remember, the punishment was death brought about by being eaten by lions!

III. GOD INTERVENED AND SPARED DANIEL'S LIFE

- A. Too late, Darius realized the evil intent behind the new law that he had authorized (vs. 11-13)
- B. Darius' high regard for Daniel is seen by the mental anguish he suffered (vs. 14-18)
 1. By his actions and words, the king proved that he really didn't believe the words of comfort he spoke to Daniel (vs.16, 18-20)
 2. Do you speak comforting words to others that you don't really believe? If so, you are lying! (Give examples)
- C. Darius was greatly relieved that Daniel was safe (vs. 19-21)
- D. God had "*shut the lions mouths*" and spared Daniel's life "*because he had trusted in God*" (vs. 22,23; Heb. 11:33)
 1. Those who place their trust in God obey Him
 2. Do you trust in God? (Illustration: Those who jump out of planes prove their trust in their parachute opening.)
- E. The enemies of Daniel were thrown to the lions (vs. 24)
 1. The wickedness of the wicked often returns upon them
 2. Haman died on the gallows he had built (Esther 7:10)
- F. Because of Daniel's great faith, God was glorified throughout the Medo-Persian Empire (vs. 25-28)
 1. Are others coming to know the true and living God through your life?
 2. Do they glorify God because of your righteousness? (Mt. 5:16)

CONCLUSION: We need Christians like Daniel, who with a prayer on their lips and purpose in

their hearts, will courageously commit themselves to a life of purity and faithful service to God. Daniel had this great courage because he had great faith in God. We ought to pray and ask God to increase our faith. (Lk. 17:5; Rom.10:17) We ought to be ashamed of ourselves when we fall into temptation and then try to justify our disobedience by saying that the temptation was more than we could overcome. (I Cor. 10:13) When you are being pressured to sin, remember the courageous example of Daniel and his three friends.

If you have not become a child of God, you need to have the courage to leave the life of sin and stand with God. If you are a Christian, you need to have the courage to stand with the Lord against all opposition.

~ Don Hastings ~