

DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN

In the third chapter of Daniel we have the record of a trial that came to the three companions of Daniel: in this chapter we have the account of a test to which Daniel himself was put. As in that one we read nothing of Daniel, so in this one we hear nothing of his three companions; but we may be sure that they were as loyal to the truth of God as was Daniel, and as they had previously showed themselves to be. We need not take it for granted that Daniel was the only one in the whole kingdom who was faithful to God, but as the whole affair was worked up simply to entrap Daniel, any others would not be noticed.

Daniel's character and talents made a place for him. There is always work for those who are fitted for it. Daniel had held the position of greatest responsibility in the kingdom of Babylon, and when the kingdom passed into the hands of the Medes and Persians he was really indispensable, so he was first under Darius as he had been under Nebuchadnezzar. There were three presidents over the one hundred and twenty provinces of the empire, and of these three Daniel was one, and was preferred above the others. All the accounts of the realm had to pass through the hands of these three presidents, and we may be sure that there was no cheating as long as Daniel was one of the three. The princes who had to render account regularly to the presidents, could not bribe him, for Daniel would not suffer such a thing; and his two companions in the presidency were prevented by his sturdy integrity from filching from the public treasury. Such honesty in public affairs was an unprecedented thing, and was appreciated by the king, who thought to place Daniel over the whole realm.

The favor in which Daniel was held, together with his strictness in business, made the other presidents and the princes envious. Small minds are always envious at the success of others; but they were incensed against Daniel by the additional fact that he was a check upon their evil purposes. There was no opportunity for them to enrich themselves while he was at the head of affairs. So they sought to find some occasion against him in his conduct of the affairs of the kingdom, but could not find anything whereof to accuse him, "forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." Daniel 6:4. His adversaries were forced to acknowledge his

integrity, saying, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Daniel 6:5. What a grand thing it is when that can be said of a man, and by those who are most anxious to find a fault in him!

The good do not always have an easy time in this world. Jesus said to His disciples: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." John 15:18. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12. The reason for this is given in this exhortation: "This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." 1 John 3:11-13. From this text we are assured of the reason why the princes of Medo-Persia wished to have Daniel out of the way. It was because his works were righteous, while theirs were evil. With him removed, they could manipulate the funds as they pleased, and they would not be under the condemnation of his presence.

Accordingly a conspiracy was formed, and the king was made a party to it, without his knowledge. Indeed, nothing could be accomplished unless they had the king's consent, and they could not expect that the king would remove his most faithful officer. So they had to manufacture a new crime. Very subtly was their plan laid. It was a very common thing for Eastern monarchs to receive divine honors, as though they were gods, and such homage was quite acceptable to them, since it was easy for them to persuade themselves that they really were what their flatterers called them. Therefore it was not at all surprising to Darius when a great company of the chief men in his kingdom came to him, and said, "King Darius, live for ever! All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask any petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into a den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." Daniel 6:6-8.

"Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree." Daniel 6:9. He readily fell into the trap, never thinking of his favorite, Daniel. If they had not lied, in saying that *all* the presidents had been in consultation over this matter, his suspicions might possibly have been aroused; nevertheless

when integrity and loyalty to principle are so rare as they are, it is not natural for kings to consider the few in whom such virtues are found, especially when they are persuaded that any measure will be “for the public good.” It does not take long to persuade most officials or seekers after office that whatever contributes to their advancement and exaltation is for the good of the public.

The plot was fairly hatched, and the decree was published. How did it affect Daniel? It did not affect him in the least. When he knew that the writing was signed, “he went to his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as aforetime.” Daniel 6:10. Think how much is conveyed in that statement. Daniel prayed to his God just as he had done before. Note that as he prayed he *gave thanks*. Not a word about the decree; no frantic request for protection; he acted as though there were no such thing. He saw no cause for fear, but only for thanksgiving, “as aforetime.” In this he fulfilled the Divine injunction, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Philippians 4:6. Without thanksgiving there is no prayer. The peace of God which passeth all understanding kept Daniel. He was the least perturbed man in the whole kingdom.

How easy it would have been for most professed Christians to find “a way out of the difficulty;” only Daniel did not find himself in any difficulty. Some would say, “There is no harm in complying with the law, since it does not demand the worship of any false god, or of any man; it merely says that we must not ask anything of any god or man except the king; and for the next thirty days we will not ask anything of anybody.” Very plausible, isn’t it? Or they would say, “If you will pray, then do it so that no one will know it. You are not obliged to let anybody know when you pray.” Ah, what a movement in favor of *secret* prayer there would have been about that time, if any prayer at all. Daniel, however, was not seeking plausible excuses for not praying to his God. He was too well acquainted with the Lord, and loved Him too well for that. He served the Lord, and that continually.

Suppose that Daniel had acted according to any of these or similar excuses; what would he have virtually been saying? Simply this, that he could not trust the Lord to take care of him when everything seemed to be against him. It would have been admitting all the claims to the heathen, that their gods were greater than the God of Israel. It would have been exalting the king and his decree above God and His law. It would have shown that all his previous prayers had been a mere

form, a pretense, without heart or feeling. It would have shown that Daniel had no faith in God. But he had *faith*, and therefore he could not act in any such way. His service of God was from the heart, and he had prayed because he believed in God; and just because he believed in God, he could not act as though he did not believe in Him. It is such times as that, that determine whether or not a man really loves and serves the Lord. Daniel would not bear false witness against God. When men were banded together against God, in the person of His servant, then was the time for faithfulness.

Yet Daniel was not the man to flaunt his religion in the faces of men; no vain boaster; his religion was a part of his life; the same every day, and therefore he did just as he had been in the habit of doing. When he went to his room his windows were open, and he did not take the trouble to shut them. Why should he? He had not done so before, and there was no more reason now than there ever was, since his God had not changed. He went about his devotions as quietly and regularly as in former days. That he was not in the habit of making noisy demonstrations when he prayed is evident from the fact that his enemies had to assemble to *find* him praying. But it is worth noting that they were quite sure of finding him at prayer. In that heathen kingdom Daniel was not ashamed to have it known that he worshipped Jehovah. And why should he be? is not Jehovah King over all? He is not One to be ashamed of.

Only one step now remained to fasten Daniel in the trap that was set for him. The grave counselors of State, whose minds were supposed to be absorbed in considerations of public interest, had plotted against an innocent, upright man, had acted the part of sneaking spies, and now they had only to be informers. But it would not do to go at once and denounce Daniel to the king, for they knew that he was Daniel's friend. So they took the precaution to get the king committed to the enforcement of the law. They said to him: "Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of thee, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." Daniel 6:12. That was just what they wanted. The king could not escape now. Having admitted that the law could not be changed, he could not possibly make an exception in favor of Daniel. By falsely representing it as the desire of "all the presidents of the kingdom," as well as of the other officials of the realm, these men had prevailed

upon the king to issue a *general* decree, while they had in mind the case of just *one man*, against whom they fully intended to use it. And after having made use of the governmental power in this way to accomplish their own private ends, they now professed great respect for that creature of their own making, the law, and appealed to the ancient traditions of the kingdom to prevent the king from saving himself from the trap into which he had fallen. The law, the law, said they, It is the law, and it must be enforced. And so it has ever been. Those Roman emperors, under whose rule the Christians suffered the most, were those who were most faithful in enforcing the laws of the empire. Even during the dark ages, when the victims of religious persecution were numbered by the hundreds of thousands, the so-called heretics were all tortured in strict accordance with the laws of the state. And even when the Saviour of the world was accused before Pilate, the Jews said, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God."

"Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day." Daniel 5:13. How artfully they sought to prejudice the king against Daniel.

"Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him." Daniel 6:14. But all was in vain. The princes were inexorable. They had framed the law for the express purpose of catching Daniel, and they did not propose to allow him to escape; so they held the king to the decree, reminding him that the honor of the kingdom was at stake, since a law once passed could not be revoked or changed.

It hardly seems possible that any thoughtful student of the Scripture can read the experience of Daniel so recorded in this sixth chapter, without noting the parallel between it and the experience of the Son of man when He was betrayed into the hands of sinners. They were both delivered up on account of envy; they were both falsely charged with such disregard of the civil authority as really amounted to treason; in both cases the accusers made use of the civil power as a means of accomplishing their own personal ends; in both cases the ruler before whom the case was tried, was satisfied of the innocence of the accused, and desired to set him free, but was led to pronounce sentence against him by the clamor of the accusers and through fear of lose of big own

position; in both cases extra precautions were taken to prevent any human interference with the complete success of the plan, the seal of the civil power being set upon the stone which closed the door of hope; in both cases those who came “very early in the morning” found that a great deliverance had been wrought through the innocence of the accused; and in both cases the Gospel of the kingdom was proclaimed throughout all the world, as the direct result of the effort to destroy the life which was revealing it. If the Jews in the time of Christ had understood this lesson from the book of Daniel, “they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” And if the people of this generation understood it, there would never be a decree passed “that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.” “Whoso readeth, let him understand.”

“Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee.” Daniel 6:16. What a wonderful influence there is in a steadfast Christian life! The king well knew that there was a power with Daniel that was with none of his other officers, and not even with himself, king though he was. He knew that Daniel had more than human power with him, and therefore he believed that the power that had made Daniel what he was, and that had kept him amid all temptations, would still keep him, even in the den of lions. And he was right; for there was no greater miracle wrought for Daniel when he was in the lions’ den than when he was in the king’s court. The same power that will keep a man upright in the midst of temptation will keep him from the jaws of wild beasts. Our adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; and when a man is kept safe from his attacks, it is but a light thing to keep him from the beasts of the forest.

The contrast is again sharply drawn between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of heaven, between the one who is surrounded with the outward indications of royalty, the pomp and circumstance of the court, and the one who has the kingdom of God within him. “The king went to his palace,” but the palace could give him neither peace of mind nor rest of body. Daniel spent the night in the den of lions, but had both, because the “kingdom of God is . . . peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” And the king was glad to go from the palace to the den of lions “very early in the morning,” and found peace of mind only in learning that the wicked scheme, in which he had acted his part, had failed of its purpose. How plain it is again made that he who sits upon a throne is not

always a king, and that character is the true test of membership in the royal family. Darius did not dare to stand for the right regardless of the consequences to himself, and the consequences of this course were destructive to his own peace of mind; he was the slave of corruption, the mere creature of circumstances. Daniel remembered that he was a servant of the living God and was loyal to Him regardless of the consequences to himself and the consequences were full of glory. He was the Lord's free man, the ruler of circumstances.

After passing a sorrowful night, the king went to the den very early in the morning. Although he had expressed the belief that Daniel would be delivered, he was not absolutely sure of it. The king evidently had a far worse night than Daniel had. A man may be far happier and more at ease in a den of lions than others are in a palace. The king's grief showed itself in his voice; as he came to the den and called, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee?" Daniel 6:20. We can see that the king was quite convinced that his gods were nothing in comparison to the God of Daniel; but here was a test question: "Is thy God able to deliver thee?" Daniel 6:20. Yes, He was. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Psalm 34:7. This had been fulfilled in the case of Daniel, who replied, not forgetting the respect due the king; "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." Daniel 6:21, 22.

It is Emmanuel, "God *with* us," who is "the Deliverer." The testimony of Paul the apostle is, "The Lord *stood with me*. . . . and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." 2 Timothy 4:17. "The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him He will be found of you: but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you." 2 Chronicles 15:2.

The penalty had been executed, and therefore Daniel could be taken out of the den without any violence to the majesty of the law. "So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." Daniel 6:23. His faith saved him.

Faith has wondrous power. Faith is the key which God has placed in the hand of man, with which he may unlock the storehouse of heaven, and share with God all that He has. He is thus brought into the current of God's own life, and experiences the power of the endless life, and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Being thus united with the whole thought and purpose of God, all heaven is at his command to give him success in the way of the Lord. By it men have "wrought

righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, cut of weakness were made strong.” Hebrews 11:33, 34.

That the line is drawn in the Scriptures just where we have indicated, viz., between our duty to God and our duty to man, is evident from the language of Daniel to the king, as recorded in Daniel 6:22. After his deliverance from the lion’s den, Daniel said to the king: “My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; *and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.*” Daniel 6:22.

Daniel did not say that he had not disobeyed the king, but he did say he had done no hurt—that is, he had done no wrong to the king nor to any other man. His disobedience was in a matter which was solely between himself and God. It was no concern of the king’s, therefore the king had no right to require obedience at his hand in that matter. This was precisely the position of the apostles when commanded not to preach in the name of Jesus. They said: “*We ought to obey God rather than men.*” Acts 5:29. The Saviour had commissioned them to preach, and the civil authorities had no right to forbid them to preach, and when they did so forbid them, the apostles had the God-given right to refuse obedience; yea, more, it was their bounden duty to refuse obedience. To have done otherwise would have been to prove disloyal to the God of heaven.

“Perhaps the lions were not hungry.” You may be sure that some of the enemies suggested that thought, and contended that Daniel should be left in the den until they recovered their appetite. Well, if they were not hungry, then there certainly could be no objection to putting these informers in for a little holiday from the cares of business; and whether they were hungry or not the king was disposed to deal very summarily with the malignant crowd. “The king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives, and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.” Daniel 6:24. That settled the question. Those men who had been under the control of the great roaring lion who walks about seeking to devour, had no protection against these lions.

How true it is that “the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.” Psalm 9:16. “He dug a hole and scooped it out, and fell into the pit he made. His mischief shall return on his own head, on his own scalp shall his violence descend.” Such under the rule of the All-righteous—is the final

issue of impenitent wickedness. Evil is made to recoil with ruinous force on the head of him who put it in motion. So it was with Absalom and Ahithophel. So it had been with Pharaoh. Must we not ascend higher yet? So it *shall* be with the Arch-enemy. The heel which he wounds shall wound his head. His temporary triumph over man shall issue in his own utter and final discomfiture. Since the kingdom of God was within Daniel and the presence of the King of heaven was with him, he had the mastery over the lions, thus showing the place which God intended that man as His servant should occupy with reference to all the animal creation; but when his accusers were cast in among the same wild beasts, knowing no kingdom but the outward and the fleshly and believing only in themselves, “the lions had the mastery of them.” Where Daniel lived, they perished. So “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8), those who have known God and believed in Him will say, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Isaiah 25:9. “That breath of His mouth” which is death to the wicked, is the breath of life to the righteous.

“Then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” Daniel 6:25-28.

When Nebuchadnezzar was on the throne of the world, the King of heaven made known to him, through Daniel’s interpretation of his dream, that the kingdom of God was the only one which would “stand for ever;” and now that “another kingdom” had succeeded Babylon, in harmony with that same interpretation, the same truth was made known through Daniel’s experience. It was the power of the kingdom of God within which delivered and rescued Daniel. It was the power of the principle of this kingdom which kept him so that he did “no hurt,” and so the same power could be revealed in his behalf to deliver him “from the power of the lions,” so that “no manner of hurt was

found upon him.” This was the convincing evidence to King Darius that the God whom Daniel worshipped was “steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed,” or hurt, as the word here translated “destroyed” is simply another form of the word translated “hurt” in the other verses. The power of the kingdom working in Daniel kept him from being “hurt” and gave him the mastery over the wild beasts. The same power of the kingdom will keep every one who believes in his God so that “nothing shall by any means hurt” him, and he “shall not be hurt of the second death.” The same power will cause the kingdom to “stand for ever,” changing the nature even of the bouts so that “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord.”

This is the everlasting Gospel.

The Gospel is the Gospel of deliverance. “He hath sent me . . . to preach deliverance to the captives.” And so in the great Gospel object lesson the Lord said, “I have seen the affliction of My people which is in Egypt, . . . and am come down to deliver them.” So Nebuchadnezzar learned to know God as the One who “delivered His servants that trusted in Him.” The same Gospel of deliverance was preached in the kingdom of the Medes and Persians, and King Darius “bare testimony to the God of Daniel,” that “He delivereth and rescueth. . . . who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” So we pray, “Deliver us from the evil one,” and should give thanks unto the Father, “who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.” “Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. . . . Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.”

In the first chapter it was stated that “Daniel continued,” and now it is added that “Daniel prospered.” He continued and prospered because he served God continually, and sought first the prosperity of the everlasting kingdom. And as “the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man. . . . and his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand,” so it was with Daniel; but both of these men met the test of maintaining their integrity under false accusations and when they were captives in a strange land. Because they submitted to an undeserved punishment rather than “sin against God,” and thus sever their close union with Him, the prosperity of the kingdom which was within them was soon revealed in their experience among men, and they were then recognized by the world as prosperous men. But Joseph in the prison and Daniel in the den of lions were prosperous men in the eyes of the Lord,

because they had steadfastly maintained the principles of the kingdom of heaven, the law of their God. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according; to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Joshua 1:8.

The result of the whole affair was that Daniel was prospered more than ever, and the knowledge of the true God was published by the king to all people, and in all languages on earth. Thus even the wrath of man is made to praise God.