

Sabbath School Today

With the 1888 Message Dynamic

Daniel

Lesson 7: From the Lions' Den to the Angel's Den

Daniel is an old man when this experience came to him—85. With the change of government from Babylon to Medo-Persia King Darius wants to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom and three commissioners, of which Daniel was one of them. Naturally, because Daniel “possessed an extraordinary spirit” (cf. Dan. 6:3, *New American Standard Bible*), he was resented by his co-workers because his trustworthiness is recognized and rewarded by the king. They are willing to do anything to keep him from being elevated over the Babylonian civil servants. The co-workers were jealous and mean-spirited so they plot against Daniel to either get rid of him or kill him.

Many younger folks today wouldn't be willing to work under such circumstances, but Daniel simply continues to be faithful to the situations God finds for him through the years. That brings up an important concept. There are those who think that the Christian walk gets easier as we age, but those of us who are in our “later years” know that isn't true. Daniel had already had several remarkable experiences throughout his life. Most of his visions had been given and written out by this event. Why didn't God just let him live in peace now that he is old?

For the same reason Paul didn't retire somewhere to a small villa on the Mediterranean. He spent most of his old age in prisons. When you once understand how good the Good News is, your age doesn't matter, you are willing for God to use you to tell people. For Daniel, God used him in a mighty way and gave us one of the more colorful stories in the Bible. But, there is a deeper meaning woven in the story of the lions' den that parallels the experience of Christ. What a privilege for Daniel to be used by God at any age. My Grandfather (who was a Seventh-day Adventist pastor) lived to 99. In his later years when his pastoring days were over, he walked all over his little town knocking on doors, looking for people who wanted to hear about the gospel. When we get older, it is a privilege to be used by God for His worthy cause.

Matthew 27:18 tells us that Pilate knew that the enemies of Jesus had delivered Him up for execution. King Darius must have realized that Daniel's enemies had set him up for execution especially after he started trying to find a way to withdraw his decree. Darius should have stood up to his satraps who were trying to execute an innocent man. Pilate should have done this as well, but both rulers chose to protect their careers even though it meant sending innocent men to die.

The king feared that he could not deliver Daniel without giving up his own position as king, just as Pilate feared that he could not deliver Christ without giving up his position as governor. Note how the Lord worked out this problem to its solution: He did not prevent these wicked men from having their way, but He permitted them to go all their

way that He might demonstrate all the more clearly His judgment of righteousness. When you are tempted to think affairs are going contrary to you, remember this story. "The wrath of man shall praise Thee" (Psalm 76:10, NASB). Doing something you know is right at the cost of your career might even be more difficult than losing your life. At least then you don't have to deal with the consequences.

Even though Daniel knew the edict had been signed by the king, he decided to continue praying to his God. In effect, just like Christ, Daniel was willing to lay down his life in order to continue his connection with his God. Daniel's God never left him, but Christ had to face the cross "forsaken" of His Father. Both Daniel and Jesus knew that more prayer, not less, was required to get them through a crisis. All of us need to learn this lesson in facing the difficulties life sends our way.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus pleaded with His Father three times to "let this cup pass." Daniel continued his practice of praying three times a day, regardless of the consequences. His co-workers expected him to do this, and they spied on Him. Christ had His spies during His earthly life, but He continued His mission regardless.

Those of us who have faced persecution specifically for sharing the 1888 message of Christ our righteousness know that God will always protect His message. Even though we may become discouraged at resistance and apathy, God is still in control.

Fortunately for Daniel, King Darius recognizes that Daniel serves a God who can rescue him even from hungry lions. Like Pilate, who looked for ways to release Jesus (see John 19:12), Darius spent quite a bit of time trying to find ways to reverse the decree. He finally must depend on Daniel's God to rescue him. It would have gone much better for Pilate if he had done the same thing.

The Message given to the Adventist church in the time around 1888 prepares us for this kind of testing no matter what our age. Like the experience of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego years before, their loyalty to God was tested with a death threat. Daniel, the man "greatly beloved" of God, was treated as was his Master, Jesus.

"Dear reader, you are a servant of God, as was Daniel. When things appear to go wrong for you, why should you give up? When the wicked soldiers picked up Daniel to throw him in the den of lions, he was probably tempted to think that God had forsaken him. Sometimes you too may think God has forsaken you. But no, He never will. If your heart is stayed on God in your hour of trial, you can be just as peaceful and happy as when you prosper.

"Daniel teaches us that a statesman or a politician can be an honest, upright man, instructed by God at every step. Likewise, if a business man is converted and consecrated, he may be as Daniel was. Daniel was successful wherever he went. He was tactful, courteous, good at heart, and faithful to principle. Even his enemies were forced to confess that 'they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful.'

“But was Daniel just naturally good? If so, there’s not much hope for us who aren’t ‘naturally good.’ What we know for sure is that Daniel was born with a sinful nature alienated from God just as much as we have been born that way. But his mother (and maybe his father) taught him the principles of the gospel. Paul says that God ‘preached the gospel’ to Abraham (Gal. 3:8); the Holy Spirit preached it to Daniel, also. Daniel was a Christ-like man simply because he was a sinner by nature who *believed* in Christ, exercising the ‘faith which works’ (Gal. 5:6)” (Robert J. Wieland, *The Gospel in Daniel*, pp. 83, 84).

—Arlene Hill

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tqz_-gpoi2g

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