

The story of Daniel in the lions' den is taught in every children's Sunday school class. Rather than focus on the essentials that we all know, let's look at some side issues not often mentioned.

#### Daniel 1

v.3 Nebuchadnezzar ordered the chief of his court officials to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility --

v.4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace.

Daniel was an adviser to the Babylonian kings for most of his life, from when they took him captive as a boy or young man in Judah through the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and his son, Belshazzar.

Daniel gave sound and profitable advice to the Babylonians for many decades. He withstood the intrigues that always develop where power and money are handled. He showed no bias or anger toward those who had killed many of his people, possibly even of his own family.

Daniel 2:24 Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom Nebuchadnezzar had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him."

All the while, Daniel followed the practices of his culture and religion without apparent prejudice toward those who followed contrary beliefs.

That requires a degree of personal integrity that comes from a continual, close, personal relationship with God and an intimate awareness of the loving forgiveness found in His nature and being.

Daniel 4:27 "Therefore, O King Nebuchadnezzar, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

After the Babylonian empire was conquered, we see that the new rulers kept Daniel in his position of responsibility and counsel, and Darius planned to promote him.

Daniel 6:3 Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

This willingness to use his God-given gifts of governance and administration without partisan loyalty to one side over another, shows Daniel recognized he was a pilgrim on this earth, a citizen of an eternal kingdom, acknowledging a higher King to whom his ultimate loyalty belonged.

The announcement of Daniel's up-coming political appointment started a plot to brewing among his peers who had been passed over, but they had to admit Daniel's political life was without blemish or stain, and no political or personal leverage was available to use against him.

The only thing that Daniel set above his loyalty to the currently ruling king was his loyalty to the Eternal King.

Daniel 6:5 Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

We know the story from there, but it is of note that king Darius felt a respect for Daniel as a person. Darius did everything he could within his royal power and authority to rescue Daniel until time for the sentence to be carried out, but failed.

Once it was done, Darius spent the night without eating, without entertainment, and without sleep. How many of us have such a relationship with any unbeliever or a not-yet Christian that they would be unable to watch TV for worry if we suddenly went into the hospital and were in ICU?

#### Daniel 6

v.19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den

v.20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

v.21 Daniel answered, "O king, live forever!

v.22 My God sent His angel, and He shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in His sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

v.23 The king was overjoyed

After that, king Darius, typical of the times and culture, reacted in a way that seems over the top to us, but \*may\* have been understandable in the light of blood feuds that would last for generations.

The death of the families of the people who plotted against Daniel was not done at the wish, command, or desire of Daniel or the direction of God. Rather it was done because Darius did not want assassins hired to kill him after he killed the heads of several rich, and powerful households.

When we find ourselves in desperate situations, God wants us, just as Daniel did, to appeal to Him rather than depend on any earthly power.

People may do all they can, but they have limits. There is no limit to what God can do for us when we trust Him as our source. It becomes a testimony to others to see God accomplish what they tried to do and failed. Read Darius' proclamation in Daniel 6:25-27.

As outstanding of a life-long follower of God as Daniel was, however, the right-standing that God attributed to him was only sufficient for Daniel himself, and could not cover or protect anyone else.

#### Ezekiel 14

v.13 "Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its people and their animals,

v.14 even if these three men—Noah, Daniel and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness," declares the Sovereign Lord.

Under the new covenant of Jesus' blood, we each are granted full pardon and right-standing with God, but it is each person's choice.

We who have made that choice bear the assignment to speak to others of their need to make a choice.

We are workers in the harvest field, and we must be led by the Spirit and walk in wisdom as we travel through an ever-darker world, filled with both wheat and tares, sheep and goats.

God is still giving us His grace and mercy to carry, His love and forgiveness made freely available to all who will repent -- we have not yet come to the time when He gives us His judgment to carry.

We have the light of God in our lives, the water of life in our beings, and the bread of life in our hands; everything a search-and-rescue team requires when looking for survivors among the victims of any attack by the enemy.

Let us live in the world as pilgrims, and remember our citizenship is not of this world. Let us lift up Jesus in our words and our actions to draw all eyes to Him.

Minister the life and love of Jesus to those who do not turn away, and show God's acceptance to any who accept His gift of life and cleansing blood.

Father God, thank You for the examples of faith You give us in Your Word. We praise You for the gift of the Spirit which teaches us and gives us strength to walk in the way we need to.

It is to Your glory and worship that we are allowed to be a part of Your emergency response teams as time grows short and darkness creeps across the face of the earth, having but a short time left.

Even as Daniel used what You gave him in the service of those who did not know You and had opportunity to point to You, sometimes even with words, so we seek to walk worthy of Your name daily that none find the means to bring fault against Your name, Lord. because of our choices.

We ask You for the wisdom we need to do the job You have called and equipped us for, and we thank You that You answer us with such abundance, Father! Be glorified, we pray!