

## 6. The lions in the den of a man of integrity

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We know and heard some of well known Bible stories so many times that as soon as we hear the first word we can finish the last one. Let's take some time to go over a few:

Adam and Eve, Sodom and Gomorrah, Samson and Delilah, David and Goliath, Jonah and the Whale, Daniel in the den of Lions

It is not unusual for men to be punished for wrong things they did, but we say, "It is not right for injustice to be done on a righteous man." We are going to see a situation of the injustice done to our main man, Daniel who is over 80 years old at this point. He served three kings, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius diligently for many decades. He is a man of integrity, the personal character we don't see that often in political realm nowadays. He is a man with conviction in God. And he is the man with actions that brings others to God.

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of tests in life: adversity and prosperity. Of the two, the latter is the more difficult. When adversity strikes, things get simple: survival becomes the goal. It is a test on maintaining the basics of food, clothing and shelter. When we go through difficulties, it is a natural thing for us to cling unto God and asking for His help. But when prosperity comes, watch out! Things get complicated. Even with good intention, it is an easy trap to fall in not seeking God's desire and His will for us. All kinds of subtle temptations arrive, pleading for satisfaction. It is then that person's integrity is put to the test.

We are way too familiar with the story of Daniel in the den of lions. But we must keep our eyes on why Daniel ended up in the lions' den and how he handled the whole thing.

### A. NO SKELETON IN THE CLOSET

*Daniel 6:1-5 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; 2 and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. 3 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. 4 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. 5 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."*

Darius the Mede was a subordinate under the Persian monarch Cyrus the Great. This name was Gubaru, and his title was Darius the Mede.

The Scripture tells us that Daniel had an excellent spirit. What does it mean an excellent spirit? It is a winsome spirit; it is a teachable spirit; it is a loving spirit; it is a humble spirit; it is honest and straight forward spirit that we all should have as Christians.

What kind of attitude do you display on the job? Are you easy and enjoyable to work with? Do you manifest a willingness to learn? Or is your attitude toward your

employer and fellow employees scarred by personal grudges, feelings of resentment and envious thoughts? The Lord wants us to have an excellent attitude on the job indeed, in whatever we do throughout life.

Sometimes today a candidate or nominee for office will be set under this kind of scrutiny – imagine looking as hard as you could at a public servant who had been in office some 50 years and finding nothing wrong. No fraudulent expense accounts. No intern scandals. No questionable business deals. No gifts from lobbyists. No accusations from his staff. No drunk driving that ends up at the bottom of a bridge.

Can you imagine trying to find this caliber of politician in Washington? Simply, there were no skeletons in Daniel's closet. This isn't to imply that Daniel was actually sinless, but that he was a man of great integrity.

From reading v5, we can tell these men knew Daniel well. They knew he could not be trapped into a typical politician's dishonesty like themselves, but they also knew that he would be faithful to his God in all circumstances. Do others know the same about us? The world is such a horrible student of our Christianity, but it is a very sufficient critic of our conducts. They may not be able to quote John 3:16, they know what real Christians are supposed to do.

## **B. SERVING ONE TRUE GOD NO MATTER WHAT**

*Daniel 6:6-11 So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! 7 All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors 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. 8 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." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the written decree. 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. 11 Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.*

These men knew Darius well, too. They knew that it would not be difficult to sway the king to be worshiped as a god. They also knew they could appeal to his pride and his desire for a unified kingdom.

V10 tells us in volume about the character of Daniel. Daniel knew what to expect if he goes against this king's vanity decree. But that didn't stop Daniel. He didn't bang his window open to flaunt his prayer life and get everybody's attention, because his window is already opened toward Jerusalem. In other word, he has been praying like this three time a day as his daily routine.

Daniel's relationship with the Lord was not crisis-oriented. He manifested and maintained a consistent walk with God. Daniel starts his prayer with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving in the blink of his death, for what? Giving thanks to God who allowed him to be kidnapped to this foreign country, made him as an eunuch, and now he is about to be a big kitty's night snack in a matter of a few hours. He was giving thanks to God for His faithfulness – the God who brought Daniel from a captive level to the top administrator of a mighty nation, the God who gave him ultimate peace that the teeth of lions could not tear away from.

Are you in peace or are you in turmoil? Jesus told us that He would give us peace that passes all men's understanding. If you don't have peace, why? Is it because you cannot see the outcome the way you want? Is it because you want your way, but God might has a different than yours and you don't like it? God doesn't give us turmoils, the devil does. The devil wants us to doubt about God's faithfulness. It is our choice, peace of God or turmoil from the devil.

### **C. LEGALLY TRAPPED**

*Daniel 6:12-15 And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, 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 does not alter." 13 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." 14 And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly 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. 15 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."*

Darius and Daniel had been legally trapped. Daniel knew what would happen if he prays to God, but he did it anyway to serve Him alone. Darius was cornered by these corrupted politicians' trick. According to their law, even the king couldn't change what the decree says.

### **D. THE LIONS IN DANIEL'S DEN**

*Daniel 6:16-23 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." 17 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. 18 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. 19 Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. 20 And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" 21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 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." 23 Then 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.*

The story of Daniel and the lions' den is as much about Darius as it is about Daniel. In fact, the king's response to Daniel's difficult situation tells us a great deal about the friendship these men had. We also discover in this account that Darius had high regard for Daniel and his convictions in God.

These lions were fierce and wild beasts. They were not toothless old lions. But the safest place that night just happened to be the den of lions. I think Daniel got a

pretty good night's sleep down there even though it was stinky. In the meanwhile, the king was sleepless on his fancy royal "Sleep by Number" bed in his beautiful palace. Torn apart by worry, guilt and anguish, king Darius passed a tormented night. He clearly cared for Daniel and could hardly wait for morning.

Daniel was so confident with his God that he didn't mind staying inside of the den and chatting with king Darius. If I were Daniel, I would say, "Hey boss, can you drop me a ladder or something to get me out of this big kitty cats' litter box. We'll talk more after I get out of here."

It is amazing that he had any faith at all, after living in that idolatrous heathen land for over seventy years. His daily fellowship with the Lord was the power of the secret.

Christians today face many temptations to compromise, and it often appears that the "safest" course is to go with the crowd. But this is the most dangerous course. The only really safe place is in the will of God. Daniel would rather die obeying God's Word than live outside of God's will.

## **E. THE PAGAN KING'S PROCLAMATION**

*Daniel 6:24-28 And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions--them, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den. 25 Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. 26 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. 27 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. 28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Daniel's faith testified to Darius, the Medo-Persian politicians and the people of Babylonia that God is the eternal, all-powerful, sovereign Ruler over all. The Lord can also use our trust in Him to glorify Himself and bring others to a living, vital relationship with Him.

## **F. APPLICATIONS**

### **1) We will seldom receive what we deserve from people.**

Whether it is criticism or honor, the world usually will not pay what is due us. So we should learn not to expect it.

### **2) Our ability to handle human injustice and divine goodness is directly related to the consistency of our walk with God.**

Only if we have stability in our relationship with the Lord will we be able to accept man's unfair criticisms and wait for God's blessings.

### **3) The only really safe place is in the will of God.**

We might think that the road we are heading gives us all the promises and comforts. But if it is not in the will of God, that road will end up in hair pin curve high mountain roads with landslides and potholes. But the will of God will lead us to a safe place where we can find rest.

**4) When we are treated unjustly, wait for God to vindicate.**

He may not demonstrate your innocence as dramatically as He did Daniel's, but the Lord will make righteousness prevail according to His perfect plan.

**5) When we are suffering undeservedly, let God use you to make Himself known to others.**

The Lord can use our trust in Him to glorify Himself during the time of difficulties and bring others to a living, vital relationship with Him.