

Daniel – Chapter 6

New International Version of the Holy Bible

We are all very well acquainted with the story of Daniel in the lions' den. We remember seeing pictures drawn by an artist of those hungry beasts and we began to feel the terror of that long night which Daniel spent with them.

But there were other lions at large in that area. No artist has ever painted a picture of them because they were invisible lions. But it is not difficult for Christian people to find them and recognize them as they roam through the chapter before us. They are very real, and extremely dangerous. It is written: **“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith”** | **Peter 5:8-9** Here is the biggest lion in the text and Daniel faced him long before he was thrown to the beast of flesh and blood. And this lion has his mates, his helpers and his pride. They join forces to tear the heart of faith out of children of God with their terrible jaws. These are the lions we must learn to know and fear. This meditation will pass over the lions in the den and point out at least two of the most ravenous beasts that slink and snap at Daniel's heels in the hope of destroying his soul.

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The first we shall call the lion of IMPORTANCE. It is hard to find a better name for him, but that does not really matter. To discover him,

look for his shadow in the first three verses of the chapter and catch the brief glimpse of him in flight in verse 10: **“It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. 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 . . . So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king . . . the king should issue an edict and enforced the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions’ den. . . Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”**

Daniel 6: 1-10

We are told that Darius the king set up an organization of princes to govern his vast empire, and was careful in selecting the right man for each post. Finally a conclusion was reached that none was as well fitted to head this organization as the foreigner Daniel, once a captive from the tribe of Judah. Here then we see Daniel, still at the top of the organization under three different kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius. Kings come and go in Babylon, but Daniel abides. The government needs Daniel as a protector of the realm. He is supremely

important, even though he must be near his 90th year. And yet, he is in grave danger and has been ever since he came to Nebuchadnezzar's court as a tender youth and was clothed in the soft garments of those that dwell in the king's houses. The roaring lion of importance was after him almost from the beginning. This beast can be dressed as a political lion, a social lion, a labor lion, or a promotion lion. He is present and hungry whenever a child of God is honored with importance by the world.

Let us probe the danger of Daniel. Here was a stranger in the country that was not his own. He came from a little farming and ranching community in Judah, from a small kingdom which was now defunct under the iron heel of a great world power. He came out of a people different from all others. He was an Israelite and known to worship the "one true God". His religion and beliefs were entirely different from those common in the heathen empire of Babylonia. He was indeed a stranger in a strange land and yet that strange land had honored and promoted him. Men bent their knees before him by order of kings who themselves leaned on this man. When the world smiles like that, how easy it is for a man to forget his provincial origins. In this case, how easy for Daniel to forget that he was an Israelite and different from others, that he did not belong to this world which pays homage to him. Judah could seem very far away, better forgotten. Here there was new and glorious opportunity, a great future that could be obtained in Babylon. Why be an Israelite, and above all, why keep

up the old religion? There was so little time for it and in any case - it no long seemed very relevant.

So we hear the old, evil lion snarling behind Daniel. Look behind you, and you will see him there too. We need not reach the heights to which Daniel attained in order to experience this danger. It is certainly not wrong to accept promotion and advancement among men. It is wonderful to be of service to the nation, community or company with the gifts that God has bestowed upon us as a part of our divine calling here upon earth. And if we are elected to be the chairman of the board, township officer or congressman because we are skilled - then our society will look to us for leadership. But let us realize that in all this there lies the temptation of becoming citizens of the world while forgetting our true home. However much the world may need us, we are yet not meant to be a part of this world. We are children of the spiritual Israel and are the people of God. Our King is the Prince of Judah, born in Bethlehem, who is our Lord and Savior and Master. The world despises him as it rejects his Kingdom. But Satan would have us lose sight of our spiritual heritage. Satan will do everything in his power to let soft clothing, personal importance and the interests of the world become so vital that they make faith and its concerns seem petty and unreal.

Should we be faithful to the Lord when the world flatters us? Shouldn't we be broad-minded and learn to live within our earthly greatness even if it crowds out our Christian principles and duty to Christ? Some promoted Christians might say: "*we cannot afford to be*

different.” “If I am mayor of the town, I must do what the town wants even in the face of my Lord’s disapproval.” “If I am in congress, I must stand and pray with atheists and heretics, though my old religion forbids it.”

The prime miracle in the 6th Chapter of Daniel is recorded in verse 10. It is a marvel of God’s deliverance that Daniel remained through all of his years a true child of Jerusalem. There his heart was and there it remained. Even his windows opened in the direction of God’s city and no duty prevented him from being in his private chambers at the hour of worship and prayer. His principles and practices of faith always came first. At heart he remained a stranger to the world and his enemies were aware of this. Though his enemies wanted to ruin him before the king, they conceded that in his record as a public servant they could find no cause of unfaithfulness. The only way to get rid of him would be through his religious activities. Daniel’s only weak spot was his worship of God, his Achilles’ heel before the world.

May God’s blessing rest upon those who serve God in the beauty of holiness and are found to be true followers of Jesus, who would be crucified only because of his Gospel and who was found to be without sin.

II

Before Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den, he came face to face with yet another devilish beast which would have torn him apart. It is

very like the lion of *"importance"* because it came from the same litter. We shall call it the lion of *"denial"*.

The jealous enemies of Daniel depended upon his on *"weakness"* to undo him. They wanted to prove him to be a stranger and unqualified to hold a high position among the regents. The Babylonian leaders are so certain of Daniel's faithfulness to his God that they lay all their plans accordingly. Taking advantage of an old Persian custom that every king among them must be honored as a son of the gods, they flatter Darius into passing a law which will put Daniel into a corner from which he cannot escape. Darius signs a decree forbidding prayer addressed to anyone but himself for the period of a month.

If everything goes according to plan, this will be the end of Daniel. He will pray to his God, the enemy reasoned, and then the lions will tear him apart. What they did not know or understand was that a lion would get Daniel either way, whether he prayed or not. And we should come to see once again that the beast waiting for him in his room was far more dangerous than the caged animals of flesh and blood. Let us suppose that Daniel simply confronted his enemies and upsets their scheme by denying his God - how easy that would have been, and how tempting a way of escape. Would you not have thought of it? And do you suppose Daniel did not see the way out?

It was not only an easy way, but a painless one. To avoid the trap, Daniel would just have to do nothing. It was not necessary for him to go to Darius and say: *"I deny my God"* or to say with the disciple Peter: **"I don't know the man."** **Matthew 26:72** No, it was not that kind of

lion which was waiting for Daniel. It was a nice, kind lion. He would purr and say: *“Why, Daniel how simple! Just keep your mouth and your window shut. Go underground with your religion for 30 days. Don’t let them catch you praying. Make them think you have quit.”*

But what do we read of this man? When he knew the decree was signed, he went into his house and kneeled upon his knees three times a day before an open window, just as he had done before the decree was posted. Some people would say that this was very foolish of him. They would assert that Daniel could have saved himself all that grief and remained true to his Lord by not parading his religion in this time of danger. Yet to say nothing is not only the easiest way of denying Christ - it is often the most wicked. Daniel did not go out of his way to testify of his faith; he just went his usual way and did not turn from it.

It is sometimes said that so long as we do not expressly compromise our faith by acts of unionism, denial or compromise with evil, we are being faithful. But we remember our Lord’s words: **“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops.” Matthew 10:27** And the Apostle commands us: **“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” I Peter 3:15** And Jesus Christ clearly stated: **“He who is not with me is against me . . .” Matthew 12:30**

The temptation to keep silence or to speak with a forked tongue when pressure is put upon us is a great temptation. But to deny our Savior by silence means that we have suffered a terrible blow from the

paw of the lion of denial. The story of Daniel is the record of a man who, by the grace of God, turned all his defenses against the lions at large and trusted in his Creator to deal in his own way with the cats in the den. And his faith and confession was not put to shame.