

failings, he has some degree of hope in Daniel's God, and he tells Daniel so. "Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee" (Daniel 6:16). This was an exercise of great faith for Darius. He could see no earthly hope in saving Daniel, for he had himself exhausted every possibility. Now his only hope for his beloved minister of state must be in Daniel's God.

Here we see illustrated the great plan of redemption. While there is no human remedy for our healing from the power of sin, there is a Divine cure. Though the decree of death has fallen upon the human race, as it fell upon Daniel, we have a Savior from sin: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

"Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. . . . And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel" (Daniel 6:16-17).

Just as Satan rejoiced when Christ's dead body was placed in the tomb and the Romans sealed the stone rolled up against the entrance, so these rulers must have rejoiced to see Daniel's fate sealed. "Daniel is as good as dead," they may have thought. But they were to find that death and the grave have no power over those who trust in Christ (see John 11:25-26). The resurrection of Christ is a sure evidence of that.

Saved by God's Angel

"Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him" (Daniel 6:18). Darius had no interest in music or those things that brought pleasure while his friend Daniel was at risk. Likewise, the consuming desire of the King of the universe is to rescue us from the mouth of the lion (see 1 Peter 5:8). Christ is pictured as the tireless shepherd seeking the lost sheep; the sleepless woman searching by candlelight in every nook and cranny for her lost coin; the longing father, watching, waiting, hoping for his wandering son (see Luke 15).

"Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever. 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. Then was the king exceeding 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 manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God" (Daniel 6:19-23).

The Bible says that, "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Psalm 34:7). As Daniel cried unto God from the depths of the pit, he gave his whole life into God's hands and his soul was at rest. Whether eaten by the lions or his life saved, all he cared for was to glorify God.

Daniel said that he was not hurt because God found him to be innocent before Him and before the king. Being counted as innocent and having the fear of God makes all the difference for the Christian. But neither of these come through self-works or human merit. Both innocence and fear come through the forgiveness lavished on all of us by Jesus Christ (see 1 John 2:1). "There is forgiveness with thee," the Bible teaches, "that thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130:4). Thus Daniel's fear of God as well as his innocence was based solidly on a trusting faith in God's forgiveness, not on his own good works (see Lamentations 3:22-23).

Reaping What We Sow

There is a Bible verse in the book of Galatians that sums up what happened next in this lion saga. "Be not deceived," it says, "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man

soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). This verse describes a principle that would direct the fate of those who had been a part of the conspiracy against Daniel.

"And 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). Perhaps it was too great a punishment to have the wives and children of these presidents and princes thrown into the lion's den with them. Of course it was the decision of Darius, not God. Yet, we should also consider that the families of these men were probably accomplices in the act of trying to kill Daniel. Even by today's standards of law they would be held guilty by association to a deliberate act of conspiracy against a government official.

Nevertheless, "the conspirators earned their punishment. We have seen that Belshazzar was rightly condemned because he sinned even though he knew about Nebuchadnezzar's experience (see Daniel 5:22). The men who tried to kill Daniel did so even though they were well acquainted with his innocence and with his excellent record for nearly seventy years. Like Belshazzar—and like many people who live in our day too—they 'refused to love the truth'" (see 2 Thessalonians 2:10). (*God Cares, vol. 1*, C. Mervyn Maxwell, p. 95).

God's Name Exalted

"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 forever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, 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).

It may seem at times that evil wins out over good and that the wicked prosper over the righteous. David struggled with this apparent injustice just like many of us do today. His own questioning testimony is found in Psalm 73. There he states, "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth" (Psalm 73:3-9).

Not until David goes into the sanctuary and sees the final end of the wicked does he realize how foolish he was for envying them (see Psalm 73:17-20). Then he confesses, "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee" (Psalm 73:21-23).

It is the same with us. We have only to understand the end of evil men and the ultimate consequence their actions bring upon themselves, and to stand firm like Daniel without blaming them for our trials. In the end Daniel again brought glory to God's name. And Daniel continued to prosper and to witness for God in his old age.

How is it with you, friend? Have you suffered some personal tragedy (some injustice, some wicked act) that has brought estrangement between you and God? Perhaps one of the many wicked works of evil in our world has undermined your faith in God's love. Do not despair, God has a day of accounts. Let His love gain the victory in your heart and leave evil to its own reward.

The Unsealing of Daniel

Study Number 7



For many of us today, politics is a dirty word full of broken campaign promises, shady contributions and questionable policies. It probably wasn't much different in the Media-Persian Empire around 460 B.C. Back in Babylon, Daniel, in his early eighties, was appointed to the highest position in the new government next to the king. While faithfully performing his new civil duties, Daniel found himself the target of a smear campaign aimed at getting him out of political office—for good. And that's when the action started. His every move was watched, every aspect of his work closely scrutinized. With a determination worthy of a better cause, the princes and governors of Media-Persia bent all the rules and finally deceived the king and unwittingly challenged the King of the universe in their efforts to destroy this man of God.

Daniel's Excellent Spirit

At the commencement of the new Media-Persian rule in Babylon, we find that Daniel has ascended to the very top of the political pinnacle in very short order. The record says that "it pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom. And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage" (Daniel 6:1-2).

Why was Daniel first? Darius was trying to run the kingdom of 120 provinces in a business-like manner, with proper accounts for the collecting of taxes and the distribution of state funds. He was looking for a trustworthy man that he could appoint over his affairs. When it came to appointing men over his business affairs, the king was concerned that he would receive damage or "suffer loss." It seems that government waste and misuse of funds was as big a concern then as it is now. Therefore, Darius wanted the most honest man he could find to whom all his governors would give full financial account. Due to his integrity, which came from his faith in God, Daniel was that man.

"Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm" (Daniel 6:3).

Just how honest and true to principle was Daniel in administrating government affairs?

"Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him" (Daniel 6:4).

Atonement through Intercession

Most of us today would have a hard time standing before our friends without fault, never mind our enemies. Yet here Daniel's *political* enemies could find no fault with which to accuse him to the king. Daniel exemplified the character of true Christianity.

In Revelation 14 we catch a glimpse of the redeemed standing on Mount Zion with Jesus Christ. They, too, are described as standing "without fault," only this time it's "before the throne of God" and they have "no guile" in their mouths (see Revelation 14:5). From the Scripture record we know that Daniel was in that crowd. But Daniel did not stand alone. This is to be the experience of everyone who receives by faith the righteousness of Christ and follows Jesus (1 John 1:7, 9; 1 Peter 2:1, 21-22; 3:10).

In the heathen courts of Babylon, Daniel's faith in Christ's righteousness was exhibited by his conduct. It is the same with everyone who is saved by the grace of God through faith. While we cannot boast in our works for salvation, we are His workmanship (see Ephesians 2:8-10). God works through us to create His image within us that it might be reflected to the world (see Galatians 2:20).

It was this that brought Daniel to the forefront, even when the very government he once served was taken over by another. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean [or obscure] men" (Proverbs 22:29). Daniel was not lost to obscurity when the Medes took over the kingdom of Babylon, because good, honest people are always needed in leadership.

Getting Something On Daniel

Not everyone in the kingdom felt as good about Daniel as did the king. It may have been jealousy, though most likely it was just plain greed that embittered the rest of the presidents and princes against Daniel. He was just too honest. No bribes. No hefty campaign contributions. Not even an occasional lobby meeting, exchanging promises for gifts. Daniel had no interest in playing politics. He was there to see that the king had no financial loss and nothing could turn him from integrity. Try as they might to dig up something against Daniel, they could not. His past was spotless. His present conduct irreproachable. He was the kind of guy we'd love to vote into office; the kind of leader we need so desperately today. No wonder he was still sought after by a new government and at such an old age. In evil desperation there was only one course they could pursue:

"Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5).

Flattering the King

"Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live forever. 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 a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the 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. Wherefore King Darius signed the writing and the decree" (Daniel 6:6-9).

Beware of flattering lips! That's the warning message here. While these presidents and princes appeared to be honoring the king with their decree, their real motive was to bring honor and gain to themselves. By getting rid of Daniel, they could run the government to their own advantage. The hidden agenda of these flattering rulers was taken up by Jude as he prophesied of the last days: "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 1:16).

This describes well the situation Daniel was faced with. The presidents and princes complained about Daniel to fulfill their own lustful desires, speaking great flattering words to the king in order to advantage themselves. This, says Jude, will be the very atmosphere pervading the ungodly of the world just before Christ returns the second time (see Jude 1:14).

Rejoicing in the Lord

Now here comes the incredible part: "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Daniel 6:10). Did you catch it?

It's *not* that Daniel knew he'd get in trouble for praying, but prayed anyway. It's *not* that he prayed openly, rather than closing his windows and praying in secret. Neither is it the fact that he prayed as often as before, three times a day.

Yes, all of this took courage. But the truly incredible point is Daniel's prayer itself. Daniel didn't just pray. He "gave thanks"! Can you imagine? Here was a man who was just about to be reported to the king for breaking a law that carried a sentence of death and he was giving thanks to God.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway," says the apostle Paul, "and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). Daniel seemed to understand the principle underlying this injunction. It is not just that we should look for the good in the bad to give thanks for. It is not just "'In everything give thanks.' 1 Thessalonians 5:18, KJV I could understand that no situation was so bad but what we could find something in it for which to thank God," says one Christian writer commenting on these verses. "Then I discovered Ephesians 5:20, where Paul says, 'for everything give thanks!' In order to pray like that, a person must firmly believe that God will make everything, absolutely everything, work out to our good and to His



glory. And that is exactly what He promises to do in Romans 8:28 ['We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.']* (God Cares, vol. 1, p. 103, C. Mervyn Maxwell). That is exactly what Daniel believed. Therefore he gave thanks to God just before being arrested and thrown into a den of hungry, carnivorous lions. Incredible! We're inclined to give thanks for the good and curse the bad. But through God's grace we can, like Daniel, give thanks for everything.

It is also significant to recognize that Daniel esteemed his prayer life with God of more importance than life itself. This kept Daniel's perspective in the right place. It would have been easy for Daniel to become bitter at this point. He could have blamed those evil presidents and princes for scheming against him and spying on his private life, but he didn't. He could have blamed the king for being hoodwinked by his dishonest governors and not seeing past their flattery, but he refused.

When our first parents sinned and God questioned Adam as to why he disobeyed Him, Adam blamed the woman. As God began to question the woman, she blamed the snake (see Genesis 3:11-13). In reality they were blaming God. He made the snake. He placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden. And if Daniel had cast the blame for his situation on anyone, he would have, like Adam and Eve, ultimately been blaming God.

Likewise, when we start pointing at other people or circumstances as the cause of our problems we are actually pointing at God. Life's trials, whether from "in-laws" or from "outlaws," are permitted by God to develop our characters and to glorify Him (see 1 Peter 4:12-14; Hebrews 12:5-11).

"My brethren," James encourages us, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." How? By "knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. . . . Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (James 1:2-4, 12).

Daniel understood this. But because he was an upright citizen who obeyed all the civil laws, he needed wisdom to know what he should do (see Romans 13:1-7). Should he obey this new law and compromise his worship of God? Given his present need, there was one thing he could not do, especially not now. He could not neglect to pray, for Daniel sensed his need of prayer even more than before. "If any of you lack wisdom," James continues, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:5-6).

As Daniel talked with God, he understood that this was no time to waver in his allegiance to the Lord, for this was a test that would bring glory to His name. He would cooperate with God by continuing his practice of prayer as he had done before and let God work out the consequences.

Daniel Reported to the King

"Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; 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. 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 6:11-13).

Under the pretext of honoring the king, these men had come up with a decree that made him a god for a month. Now, under the same pretext, they sought to accuse Daniel before him. Yet Daniel was the one person the king knew he could trust above all his governors and princes. The king recognized, no matter what the accusations were against Daniel, that this man was one of the few in his kingdom that really did honor him. Now, when it was too late, the king saw through the mischievous plan of those who pretended to venerate him.

It is the same with Satan's accusations against God. He has so misrepresented God's character as to make us believe that we cannot fully trust Him (see Genesis 3:4-5). In actuality God is to us as Daniel was to Darius, the one Person we can really trust to bring us no harm or loss. Like the presidents and princes who accused Daniel, Satan is "the thief" that comes to "steal, and to kill, and to destroy," but Christ has come that we "might have life, and that . . . more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Like Darius, however, mankind realized too late the serpent's real objective in the garden of Eden. Yet there is still hope as we trust by faith in God, as the king was about to discover.

The King Tries to Save Daniel

Back in chapter 1 we noted that "God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel" (Daniel 1:9, NIV). Here we see again how the excellent spirit of God in Daniel brought Darius into close sympathy with him. He desperately "set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him" (Daniel 6:14). When they saw this, the rulers of the kingdom pressed the king, confronting him with the fact that no decree of the Medes and Persians signed by the king could be changed. "Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed" (Daniel 6:15).

This must have been the final straw for the king. He could now see clearly that though he was doing everything to save Daniel, these governors and presidents were bent on destroying him. Now he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that their pretended honor was all a cover-up to get Daniel. But what could he do? He was sick inside and "sore displeased with himself" for being so blind (see Daniel 6:14). Yet, despite his own