

DANIEL DELIVERED FROM THE LIONS' DEN

Rev. Karl R. Alden

Lesson: Daniel 6

“So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God” (Daniel 6:23).

The name “Daniel” means “God is my judge.” There are many standards by which we may judge what course we will take in life. Some people make all of their decisions in life with an eye to power. Some regard wealth as the most important objective, while others court social position and the esteem of others. But Daniel rose above all of those worldly considerations. For him there was but a single criterion, there was only one question to answer, and that was the judgment of his God. “God is my judge.” That is what his name means, and that is what his character portrayed.

Because God was his judge, Daniel was honest for honesty’s sake. He was not honest with the king’s money because he was afraid that some of the Chaldeans would catch him in fraud; he was honest because it was right to be honest, because the law of his God said, “You shall not steal.” It was from obedience to this law that his honesty sprung.

Daniel was also loyal to his king; not so that he might curry favor with him, not so that his king would advance him. No. Daniel was loyal to his king because in the commandments of his God he read that he should honor his father and mother, and the land that was feeding him had become his mother, and he would do it no wrong.

There is a tremendous difference in the paths that people tread when they are motivated on the one hand by expediency, or, on the other hand, by the law of their God. Daniel represents all those who strive to live according to the law of God. “God is my judge.”

Such striving always arouses the jealousy and enmity of those who act from worldly-wise motives, who decide everything according to expediency, who have no real standard of truth and no God that they genuinely worship. This envy is well demonstrated in the story of Daniel. The Chaldeans resented the fact that he had risen to be high in the land, just below the king. So they watched Daniel, seeking for some accusation they could make about him to the king. But when they examined his accounts they found that Daniel never cheated Darius. So then they listened to his speech, but they could not find a disloyal word he had said against his master. Finally, in exasperation, the Chaldean

princes said, “We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God.”

So, craftily, they went to Darius and flattered him by making him believe that he was almost a god himself. They urged him to let no one make any prayer to any God or person except him. And Darius, not thinking the thing through, signed the decree. Then Daniel’s enemies had the ground work laid to accuse him. Stealthily they watched him, hovered around his house, saw him raise the windows toward Jerusalem three times a day, saw him kneel, heard him make a petition to his God as he had done before.

Joyfully these princes went to Darius and told him that they had caught Daniel praying to his God and so violating the king’s decree. Then, for the first time, Darius realized the trap that had been set for him and how he had fallen into it. For he loved Daniel because he was really honest, and Darius could trust him. So the king labored to the going down of the sun to save Daniel, but it was useless: the law of the Medes and Persians can not change! So, finally, Darius had to have Daniel cast into the den of lions.

But then the Lord helped Daniel. The God in whom he believed shut the lions’ mouths so that they did not hurt him.

In the morning when Darius came to the mouth of the lions’ den he called in a lamenting voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

Then Daniel answered, “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.” Then Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no hurt was found on him, “because he believed in his God.”

In the bad sense, lions represent falsities—lies people tell about you, lies that people try to make you believe, all sorts of things that are false and that lead away from the worship of the true God. Now the only kind of people that this kind of spiritual lion can destroy are people who put their trust in themselves, who try to determine for themselves what is right and what is wrong, and who put no faith in Divine Revelation. Such people, in the end, are always devoured by the lies that they believe and the lies that they create.

But, when a person makes God his judge and strives with all his might to let the whole of his life flow from that principle, then he is protected against the vilest kind of slander. Because of his innocence toward God, and his innocence toward his neighbor, such a person cannot be harmed by the lies. His God will shut the lions’ mouths.

Two great lessons that we should always try to remember are brought out in this story: "So they took Daniel up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God,"

The first thing is the knowledge that the time to prepare faith in our heart is when we are in freedom, before the storm rages about us and the pangs of adversity make us shudder. When our life is normal, then we should strengthen our faith. Because Daniel always, three times a day, opened his windows toward Jerusalem and prayed to his God, then, when adversity came, he was still doing the same thing. Not even the threat of the lions' den could make him cease. So, at the moment of his trial, Daniel already had all the protection of a supreme faith in God.

The second thing we should remember is that no manner of harm came to Daniel, even in the lions' den, because he believed in his God.

May we pray, then, that, like Daniel, we will make God our judge, and, through daily worship of Him, allow Him to build up in our hearts a faith that will be triumphant in the greatest disasters, a faith that will be supreme. Then it may be said of us spiritually, when we are cast to the lions of deceit and lying, that no manner of hurt will be found upon us, because we believe in our God.

Amen.