

Hurst Green

24th Jun 2018

Daniel 6

Daniel and the lion's den

So last week Daniel had been appointed number 3 in the Kingdom for it all to come crashing down that night when Darius took over.

But Daniel stayed in a position of power ruling over 40 of the 120 Satraps as a very powerful man.

He was so good that Darius was thinking of promoting him to run the whole Kingdom.

And so we come to one of the most widely known of the stories in the bible – the lion's den! There has been much preached about it as well as some absolute tosh - Daniel had not met the lion before and pulled a thorn from its paw. There had to be more than one lion because they were going to have to eat 120 satraps and their wives and children.

But the lions have lessons for us today so don't sit back thinking this is an easy one.

Daniel is so relevant for us today as he is living in a hostile environment – people are out to get him because he finds favour by doing the right thing. Throughout his time in exile and it is some 70 years now he has stayed faithful to the one true God and has influenced kings because of it – Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar have come to acknowledge our God as the all-powerful.

Are they doing better than we are – do you feel that you worship an all-powerful God? Or is God always on the back foot never quite breaking through?

Daniel was finding favour and the Satraps did not like it so they examined Daniel carefully to find a way to bring him down to their level.

Daniel 6:4 (ANIV)

⁴ At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

Here we have one of the powerful human emotions at work – jealousy!!

Watching him they found he did his duties and did them well. He did not cut corners or miss out bits.

Now that should encourage us to learn to do better – perhaps even ask for the help of the role model so that you can do as well as they do.

But jealousy does not work like that – how much easier to tear them down than to build yourself up.

After all you are all too aware of the failings in your own life – you might keep them hidden; or at least think you do but they are there.

This goody two shoes must have some – they are just better at keeping them hidden.

So jealousy works to try and reduce things to a lower common denominator and we see it in the world today.

Many of the so called reality TV shows are based on this – it is not how well I do but can I show that the others are worse than I am!!

Daniel went about this the other way

There is your first challenge – if those out to get you examined you would they find this in your life.

That your work is faultless and without corruption. Are you standing out because as a Christian you do your work as if it were for Christ and so people could find nothing wrong?

Would anyone examining your life come to the same conclusion as the Satraps

Daniel 6:5 (ANIV)

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."*

Now there is another lesson in this for us – we would like to think that if we only did what was right all would be well for us but Daniel shows that is not the case.

Daniel only did what was right and did it so well he ruled one third of the Kingdom but it was exactly that which is getting him into trouble here. The Satraps are challenged by his goodness and his righteousness.

His devotion to his God has made him stand out and the rest of the world does not like it.

1 Peter 5:8 (ANIV)

⁸ *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

If your enemies examined your life in real detail would they have to come to the conclusion that the only way they could get to you was through your devotion to God?

You probably all remember that question that used to be asked: “If you were arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you?”

Would there?

So the Satraps hatched there cunning little plan

Daniel 6:7-8 (ANIV)

⁷ *The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce 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.* ⁸ *Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."*

They knew Daniel would break this because he would continue to pray to his God just as he had done for all his life.

Darius had been tricked – he had not spotted what his advisors were up to and had issued a decree that could not be changed.

Daniel 6:10 (ANIV)

¹⁰ *Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.*

And in there is a key lesson for you. It is no use waiting for the storm to break and then trying to figure out what to do.

Daniel went and prayed **just as he had done before**. And note this man in exile prayed by giving thanks to his God.

He went and prayed because that was what he did. He did not go and pray because this decree had been passed. If this was not his habit it would have been easy not to pray for thirty days and get around the decree.

But Daniel was having none of this.

He prayed to his God three times a day even while ruling one third of the Kingdom that worshipped other Gods.

Do you pray three times a day?

Remember when we did “five a day” – praying for our friends for five minutes for five days a week how hard you found that? What about three times each day even if each time was only five minutes?

That would be over 1000 prayers per person per year.

There are about thirty people who attend this church so that would be nearly 33,000 prayers each year. That would be over 164,000 minutes of prayer per year.

If all of us would pick up a habit of praying three times a day just for five minutes the volume of our prayers to heaven would increase dramatically. That could really change things.

One man praying three times a day had already changed two mighty rules and was about to change a third – what could thirty praying people do?

Anyway Daniel hears the decree has been passed and goes and does what he has always done – he prays to his God.

Now note that the battle of the lion’s den was not won in the lion’s den it was won in this upper room where Daniel had prayed for most of his life.

Darius realises he has been tricked but knows there is no way out – under their system a decree cannot be changed and Darius making every effort in verse 14 he can do nothing and Daniel is off to the lion’s den.

Even then Darius says to him

Daniel 6:16 (ANIV)

¹⁶ ~~*So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"*~~

What a testimony – this heathen king recognises that Daniel’s God has the power to rescue him. Even unbelievers respect a true faith in God.

So Daniel goes into the den. He knew the consequences of his prayer and he did not try and escape them. He did not know what was going to happen – he might even end up lunch for a pack of lions but he also did not make a deal with God.

Just like his friends before the furnace he waited to see what God's plan was.

Darius had a very bad night

Daniel 6:18 (ANIV)

¹⁸ Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

He also waited to see what the plan of the most high God was but without the confidence that Daniel's prayer life had brought to him.

At first light he dashed down to the den to find out what had happened.

Daniel 6:20-22 (ANIV)

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?"

²¹ Daniel answered, "O king, live for ever! 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."

V23 says that Daniel had trusted his God and in verse 22 his God had sent an angel to shut up the mouths of the lions and so Daniel was spared unlike those who plotted against him who ended up as the lion's breakfast in v24 but note Daniels statement at the end of verse 22 – ***"Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O King."***

Daniel had been righteous not only before his God but before his earthly master – the King. Do not forget that - We serve earthly masters and have to be righteous before them.

And in verse 26 & 27 we have a third pagan king issuing a decree that all must reverence the Most High God.

A third King telling his people that our God will endure for ever; that our God's kingdom will not be destroyed and that our God performs signs and wonders.

Do we believe this is **or is our pagan king out believing us again?**

So let us take some lessons from the lions den:

- It is possible to live a fully Christian life in a pagan world.
- If we live our lives for God we will get opposition – learn to deal with it.
- If we live our lives how God has told us we will touch people for God. Some will become Christians because of how we live.
- When the going gets tough it is too late to start the solution. Start the solution of living a God filled life and then when it gets tough you will get through it
- God will deliver you but it will be in his way and his time because that is better for you than the half thought through plan you have.