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Grace Evangelical Church
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"Alive In The Lion's Den"
Daniel 6**

Thank you for that skit of Daniel being thrown into the lions' den and God's protection of Daniel.

The account of Daniel in the lion's den recorded in Daniel 6 is a true happening. I say that because this a fanciful story, a nice story without any historical validity in the minds of those who do not accept the Bible as being true historical fact.

Regardless, what is recorded here by Daniel many years ago actually happened in our time-space relationship.

What, then, can we learn through this account that depicts Daniel in the lions' den and his deliverance from the lions' den?

1. As God blesses the believer, he keeps his focus on the Lord, the source of the blessings, not on the blessings He gives him (Daniel 6:1-3).

(1) After the Persians defeated the Babylonians in 539 B.C. the king, Darius, probably Cyrus, evidently restructured the kingdom of Babylon now the kingdom of Persia. He appointed 120 satraps or assistants to himself. Over these assistants were three commissioners or rulers of which one was Daniel – chose because he was trustworthy, so that the king would not suffer loss, financial loss.

(2) Daniel showed great wisdom and skill in his place of leadership, so much so that the king was getting ready to appoint him as the ruler over the entire kingdom, that is over the other 2 commissioners and the 120 satraps or commissioners.

(3) Obviously, Daniel was being blest by the Lord. He was enjoying recognition by the king of Persia and had been given much power by the king. It couldn't be much better than this for Daniel.

(4) But Daniel didn't let God blessing Him with fame and power cause Him to take his focus off of the Lord, His Source and Savior, and get caught up in the position that God had given Him, which if Daniel would have, he could have easily forgotten the Lord's person and care.

How wise Daniel was. Perhaps he remembered what God had told Israel through Moses before they were to enter the promised land.

It's recorded for us in Deuteronomy 8:7-20.

Let me include just a few verses here.

"For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; otherwise when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

“Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”

Then the text ends this way,

“It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve and worship them, I testify against you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.”

Note the contrast.

Why was the nation of Israel in captivity in Babylon now Persia? When God blessed them, they didn't honor, thank, and worship the LORD who gave them the blessings, privileges and position. Rather they let the blessings of God cause them to think that they had arrived where they were on their own power, energy and wisdom. As a result they forgot their LORD, their Source and Savior, and went after other gods, rebelling against the true and living eternal God who was their Father and Savior. Due to their disobedience and lack of repentance, God sent them into captivity.

On the other side of the coin was Daniel, who was brought into captivity with the others a number of years ago. He had a different heart, one that trusted in God along with his three friends. Again, in our text, Daniel is on display with position and power in the king of Persia's palace, the White House of Persia. What's he going to do? Act like those who were sent into captivity because they took for granted what God had given them?

Is Daniel going to let his position and power cause him to forget His LORD who has blessed Him with such incredible power and position?

No, Daniel is not like the nation Israel, rather he keeps focused on the Lord, realizing that he only has this position and power in the Persian empire because God gave it to him. He is humbled to be a servant of God in such an amazing position.

What a lesson for all of us. God blesses us all differently with innate abilities and with spiritual gifts. He blesses us all differently financially. He gives some of us the privilege to serve in the local church. We must never take what God gives us for granted, yes, as something we have done on our own. I have seen pastors slip into this mind set, and seem to think that they are the answer to humanity. They become the CEO rather than the shepherd. It can cause all kinds of consternation in a local church. Of course, sad to say, some have fallen because of letting power and position start driving their lives rather than being grateful to the Lord for where they find themselves, and recognizing Him as the Sovereign Source of their lives.

As God blesses us, we must keep our focus on the Lord, the source of the blessings, not on the blessings He gives us.

2. The believer, who keeps focusing on the Lord when He blesses, will have his faith tested, particularly from the evil one (Daniel 6:4-9).

(1) Evidently, the other two commissioners, and the assistants started to become jealous of Daniel, because of his superior ability in leadership. One commentator suggested that the other leaders came to hate Daniel because he was so honest with the money that they couldn't cheat the government out of money for themselves. They may also have heard that Daniel was about to receive a promotion, which they, particularly the other commissioners would have liked to have, I'm sure. At the same time, for a Hebrew, who was part of the

captivity in Babylon/Persia to be in a place of leadership along with them, may have also caused them to be hateful of Daniel.

(2) The leaders' jealousy and hatred of Daniel caused them to start looking for a way that they could get back at Daniel in order to bring him down from his position and power.

(3) Note that they recognized that Daniel's leadership was impeccable (Daniel 6:5). But there was one area they thought they could use to topple Daniel from His position and power – that which would be against the law of his God. They thought the relationship that Daniel had with his God was his weak point in his life when actually it was his strength. They did not know that God blesses those who bless Israel, but those who don't eventually will be brought down.

Evidently, these men knew that Daniel was a religious man, and perhaps had seen him praying at different times, so they figured that this is where they could bring Daniel down from his power, even have him destroyed.

(4) The leaders contrived a plan whereby they would have the king sign a 30 day statue that anyone who makes a petition to any other god beside the Persian god, or man besides the king would be thrown into the lions den.

Obviously, even though the men who came to the king said that all of the government officials agreed, that was probably quite a stretch – certainly Daniel had not agreed.

This was basically the same plan that was tried against the 3 Hebrew men who were challenged to bow down and worship the statue when the king's orchestra played.

The Babylonians and Persians knew that the Hebrew men had a strong faith in their God. So challenge their faith and see what they would do when they had to worship another god or give honor to the king that would make him out to be god.

(5) Hearing the plan, the king probably was flattered, thinking that it would elevate his popularity and unite his Persian in a greater way after having recently defeated the Babylonians.

The king signed the document, probably excited that the entire empire would give his god honor and in recognizing him as representing his god.

What was the temptation here? It was promoting humanism in the place of the revelation of the true and living God. It was saying that man's way is superior to the biblical God's way.

Human Manifesto II (1973 – which comes off of Human Manifesto I – 1933) says this: Such is still very much a part of our society, where man is the measure of all things, and controls his destiny. purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves. Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualization, and from rectifying social injustices.

You're probably aware of the advertising that is being done by the Freedom From Religion Foundation in Madison on the inside of buses in the city, with the sign, "I don't believe in God because I don't believe in Mother Goose" Charles Darwin. I'm sure that they have used a quote from Darwin since 2009 has been labeled "The Year of Darwin" in an effort to promote Darwin's 200th birthday and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his book *On the Origin of Species*. They started running different ads on February 23, on the inside of 50 metro buses, and will be quoting different people in six different ads over the next two months stating why they are atheists. They are spending about \$2100 on their advertising.

Then the Pilgrims Covenant Church in Monroe has launched this bus ad, "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God" (Psalm 14:1). This ad will rotate on the outside of eleven different metro buses in the next month. The church is spending about \$5000 on their advertising.

Of course, the denial of the biblical God doesn't do away with the existence and reality of the biblical God. These who use their reason to deny the biblical God's existence don't realize that the only way that they can think and even deny God is that He has given them the capacity to do so.

But the challenge for the true follower of Jesus Christ is to not be influenced by humanism, which comes from the evil one, where one begins to think that he or she can run his or own life and that his own wisdom and strength have gotten him where he is.

Of course, Daniel didn't fall into that trap which is why he is where he is in this book and the author of it.

He knew he would be tempted, he would be tested, and he was ready for it, not surprised in the least at what was happening. I trust that we are not either as followers of Jesus Christ.

3. When the believer is blest by God and keeps focusing on the Lord when tested, he continues faithfully to do God's will (Daniel 6:10-11).

Note the text.

- (1) **When Daniel knew about the king's document to worship only the false gods,** and if he didn't he would be thrown into the lions' den, Daniel went home full of fear. No, that is not what the text says, does it?
- (2) **When Daniel heard about the document from the king, he went home, opened up his windows and prayed toward Jerusalem** – a practice carried out by David (Psalm 5:7) and Solomon (II Chronicles 6:21). What faith, what courage, what dedication.

Daniel obeyed God rather than the government. When the government would stop him from obeying his Lord, he would obey HIM, rather than the government. We still have certain freedoms in our country, but in other countries today, they have to meet in secret, and of course some have lost their lives for obeying the Lord rather than government.

Since Daniel had a copy of Jeremiah's prophecy (Daniel 9:1ff), His prayer could have included asking God that Israel would be returned to her city, Jerusalem, and her homeland from which the country had been exiled. Note as well that he gave thanks to the Lord, kneeling to the Lord, sensing the urgent need of his prayers for his people. Praying three times a day was a practice that dated way back to David (cf. Psalms 55:16-17). One commentator suggested that since the window was open it symbolized that Daniel's prayers were unhindered. Since windows were normally small and high, Daniel wouldn't have necessarily been seen by others.

Evidently, here we see one of the secrets of Daniel's life. He was a man of prayer regardless of the situation. Even when his very life was threatened, he prayed to the true and living God, perhaps even praying for those who were seeking to have him thrown into the lions' den.

- (3) **Some of the officials came by and saw that Daniel was praying.** They thought that now they had Daniel. Their deceptive and destructive plan had worked beautifully.

What a challenge for all of us today. When we are tempted or tested to disobey our Lord, we don't yield to temptation, but continually keep obeying Him. That's what Daniel did, who was a type, an illustration of Christ. Of course, Christ was the ultimate example of not yielding to temptation, and won eternal redemption for us.

In spite of knowing his life was at stake, Daniel kept trusting in the Lord praying to Him that He might intervene.

4. During the blest believer being testing, he can count on the Lord's presence with him (6:12-22).

- (1) The leaders of those wanting to topple Daniel from being the leader over them went immediately to the king upon seeing Daniel praying. They reminded the king of the petition he signed about not making any request to any other but the Persian god and/or the king for 30 days. The king replied that was right.
- (2) The leaders against Daniel told the king that Daniel who is one of the exiles of Judah had gone against the petition of the king.
- (3) When the king heard these words, he was very distressed, upset, and began thinking how he might rescue Daniel.
- (4) The men reminded the king of the injunction again, and that the laws of the Medes and Persians must be fulfilled (the unchangeable laws of the Medes and Persians), must be kept.
- (5) The king followed through with his orders and had Daniel brought in.
Note the king's words in **Daniel 6:16** – **"Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you." The king realized that God was with Daniel. Daniel was a close friend of the king, and evidently knew something about Daniel's faith.**
- (6) Daniel was cast into the lion's den, perhaps a large underground cave or big pit with an opening at the top and perhaps an opening at the side.
- (7) The king experienced a restless night fasting with no entertainment. This shows how much the king respected and loved Daniel.
- (8) At dawn he came near the den and called out to **Daniel (6:20), "Daniel, servant of the living God, has you God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"**
- (9) Daniel responded with these words recorded in **Daniel 6:22).**
"My God sent His angel and shut the lion's mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."
- (10) The king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken out of the den. **No injury was found in him because he trusted in God.**
- (11) The men who had maliciously accused Daniel were cast into the lions' den with their wives and children, and they were killed by the lions. Their sins affected their families – corporate solidarity – which was carried out at that time.

As with the three young Hebrew men in the fiery furnace, where God protected them, and brought them out without even a smell of smoke on their clothes, so here, God protected Daniel as he was in the lions' den. God sent His angel, perhaps the preincarnate Christ as may have been with the three young Hebrew men in the fiery furnace.

But the reality is that the Lord is always with us as we experience our lion's den. He promises never to leave us not forsake us. The Psalmist penned that the Lord gives His angels charge over us (Psalm 91:12). It seems from Matthew 28:10 that children may have a guardian angel. In fact Hebrews 1:14 teaches that angels are ministering spirits to minister to those who will inherit salvation.

No matter what we are going through in life, regardless of our lions' den, our Lord is there with the believer. In fact He lives in the believer. The believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is the believer's comforter, his encourager, his strength.

In fact, realizing that the Lord is with us is the encouragement to keep hanging on to His promise that He is there. He is our strength and hope.

5. God's power is greater than the evil one who brings the testing to the blest believer (Daniel 6:22-24).

Take a moment to think of what was happening with Daniel in the lions' den. A lion is a ferocious animal. What happened to Daniel's accusers and their families is a case in point in this chapter. What happened to the lions

who could have eaten Daniel alive? **What did Daniel say to the king? "God sent His angel and shut the lion's mouths, and they have not harmed me."**

I believe that these lions are a picture of the evil one, the devil, himself, who prowls about as a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour (I Peter 5:8). And as someone has pointed out, the lion doesn't make a sound until he has gotten his prey. How sneaky is the old tempter. Here he is pictured in these lions. He used the wicked men to get Daniel thrown into the lion's den.

But who is greater? The Lion of the tribe of Judah, he has prevailed. C.S. Lewis calls him Aslan. He has all power. He defeats the evil one, summarized in His death burial and bodily resurrection. Jesus, the Lion of Judah has prevailed over the evil one (cf. Revelation 5:5-10).

"The Lion of the tribe of Judah has taken the seven sealed book, the book of redemption, and opened it . . . He was slain and purchased for God with his blood men from every tribe and tongue, and people and nation."

That's why I mentioned that that angel that came and shut the lion's mouths, could have been the pre-incarnate Lion of Judah who came rescued Daniel from the very mouth of the evil one pictured in the literal lions.

What an encouragement to Daniel in exile for some 60 years to know that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah was alive and well and protecting him even in exile and able to deliver his people from exile, which happened in 536 B.C.

What an encouragement to the people of Israel in that day, who I'm sure heard about Daniel's deliverance. – our God has not forgotten us.

What an encouragement to us today, as we see different events take place in our country and our world – as world leaders get together to try to solve the economic crisis. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah is on the throne. He is in control and will prevail, His program is right on schedule.

Yes and as we stand strong in the Lord and His might, as Daniel did, and use the armor that God gives, His very word, we can defeat the evil lion and be victors in Jesus Christ. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Yes, what a reminder that as the accusers of Daniel and their families were thrown to the lions, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah will bring His judgment on those who reject Him.

6. God continues to bless and use the blest believer after delivering him from the testing (Daniel 6:25-28).

Darius went beyond what Nebuchadnezzar did (Daniel 4:3; 34-35), as he recognized the sovereign God. Darius praised the LORD as Nebuchadnezzar did, but in addition, Darius ordered the people to do the same.

"I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel:

'For He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and his dominion will be forever. He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.'"

What a testimony to the true and living God by this pagan ruler. It seemed to come from a genuine heart change, although God knew his heart.

This was a tremendous encouragement to Daniel and to his people in exile, but also a picture that God was in control and working out His deliverance for them, for shortly Cyrus would make a decree that the people of Israel could return to their homeland under Zerrubabel.

Daniel then continued to enjoy success in the reign of Darius and Cyrus, who may have been the same men. Daniel's career in government ended in 538 B. C., the same year that Cyrus issued the decree for Israel to return to their homeland (Ezra 1).

God protected Daniel in the lions' den. In a pagan land, in the pagan king's court, the LORD protected Daniel as he served the king in his high office.

We today, as followers of Christ, live in a pagan land, our citizenship is in heaven, we are here to be a witness for our Lord as Daniel was in his day. Today, we have the complete revelation in Jesus Christ and in the Bible. We can use the word of God, as Christ did, to ward off the temptation of the evil one as he tempts us in our minds to disobey the Lord.

May His blessings to us cause us not to turn away from Him so we are victims rather than victors when we experience our lions' den. Rather, may we use our position in Christ that we are conquerors through Him who loved us.

Michael Spencer has written an article which has been circulating on the internet this week entitled the "Evangelical Collapse." Some of you may have seen it.

Michael is an evangelical who has been in Christian ministry and has his own web page and blog. He has some very provocative reading if you go on his web page.

He writes that we are on the verge – within 10 years – of a major collapse of evangelical Christianity. This breakdown will follow the deterioration of the mainline Protestant world and it will fundamentally alter the religious and cultural environment in the West. He says that due to the rising opposition to Evangelicalism, many will quit. Due to many evangelicals identification with certain cultural issues, they will be marginalized. They have been for a cause rather than understanding and applying their faith.

Spencer goes onto say that we have failed in communicating to the next generation what faith in Jesus Christ really means and the discipline it entails. They may know something about the culture war but they don't know the essentials of their faith and how to communicate it. Thusly, they will unprepared for the cultural pressures that are coming upon them.

He sees the mega churches losing their clout, and perhaps a more authentic and vibrant Christianity arising through house churches, and other churches who see through the form of Evangelicalism without any power.

He is quick to admit that he is not a prophet in his observation.

Still his article should cause all of us to take note of our lives and see if our faith in the Lord is based upon how God blesses us, or based upon Him and His Word, and whether we look at ourselves as victims when we are alive in our lions' dens or we see ourselves as victors.

May we live in the power of the Holy Spirit this week, even as we experience being in the lion's den. Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord!

Praise His Name!