

Daniel's Divine Protector

Daniel 6:18-23

Introduction

We return to Daniel. The chapter began with a hostile plan (vv.1-3) against Daniel. His enemies failed to find something in his life that could be used against him in order to remove Daniel from his position of authority and influence. The accusers of Daniel concocted a scheme to trap Daniel by using his commitment to prayer and worship by making it illegal to pray to any god or man except the king for a period of 30 days. Darius is tricked into signing the decree (vv. 6-9). Daniel knowing the decree continued his daily regime of prayer (v.10). Daniel's devilish foes gleefully report this to the king and insist that Daniel be punished according to the new law (vv. 11-13). King Darius knowing he has been tricked into signing a decree that would impose the death penalty on Daniel seeks to find some legal loop-hole to rescue Daniel. Unable to find that loop-hole the king reluctantly orders Daniel's arrest and Daniel is lowered into a den of lions (vv. 14-15). The king will spend a sleepless night as he contemplates Daniel's fate.

I want to remind you that Daniel is now an old man. He is probably in his mid-eighties. He has spent his life in captivity, praying towards Jerusalem, honoring God, serving God and serving his country. For Daniel his morning began with his enemies deception; at noon the king's decision; but the night—the night will be a night of experiencing God's personal power and presence; deliverance and protection. The contrast could not be more stark; a king in anxiety and distress; and a prophet in peace and safety. The king had labored in vain to save Daniel from judgment and was helpless and could not circumvent his own law. Anxiety creates a place of torment. In our story who is the real king and who is the real slave?

Daniel has made a choice. He would rather die obeying God's Word than live outside of God's will (see Wiersbe; Expository Outlines of the Old Testament; p.571).

Now we understand how Daniel is nominated and gains entrance into the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 joining notables like Abel and Enoch; Noah and Abraham; Isaac and Jacob; Joseph and the parents of Moses; Moses; Joshua and Rahab. Saints who through faith subdued kingdoms; worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions" (v.33).

Satan comes as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8-9). He uses our enemies to seek to destroy us. The Lord can and will protect and deliver His children from danger; but that protection and deliverance is always according to His will and to His glory.

And like Daniel the exercising of this faith and trust will require patience; and courage and a heartfelt confidence in the living Lord Jesus.

The King's Distress And Anxiety (vv.18-20)

Daniel 6:18–23 (NKJV) 18Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him.

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In our last study we noted the king's decision and distress (vv.16-17).

The king was disturbed on several levels (Ron Rhodes; *40 Days Through Daniel*; p.160). Why was the king so upset? The king knew that Daniel was wise, good, godly and trustworthy. Was Daniel innocent? Technically he had broken the king's law. But the law was unfair and unjust and plain stupid. This was the other reason for the king's distress and anxiety. The king was duped into signing into law a decree that made it impossible for Daniel to obey God's Word. Any law that forces Christians to break the law of God are unwise and unreasonable. The government leaders tricked the king by appealing to his vanity under the guise of giving citizens the opportunity to pledge their loyalty to the king. What they really wanted to do was to destroy Daniel.

No wonder the king couldn't eat or sleep. The word fasting is interesting. The Aramaic language and the Hebrew root word means "to cover the mouth"; hence fasting. The fast was traditionally a time to abstain from food in order to pursue spiritual disciplines like self-evaluation and repentance from sin. Fasting wasn't simply the decision not to eat; but rather to pursue a right relationship with God through prayer and personal reflection or reading God's Word. I suspect the king this king fasts because he is overcome with worry for Daniel.

In an age where there was no TV or internet or radio live musicians served the wealthy and powerful for around the sundial entertainment and diversion.

19Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.

It would seem that the break of day was the earliest possible time that the king allowed himself to visit the prophet in the place of punishment. The trial or ordeal was now over. In the ancient world there were "trials of ordeal" that were in part meant to discover the guilt or innocence of the accused party. The thought behind the trial of ordeal was that if the victim survived they were innocent—and if they didn't—they were guilty. The idea being that if the deity intervened or provided some supernatural miracle—that was proof positive they were recipients of the gods' (or God's) favor.

It was neither logical or probable to find anything left of Daniel other than bones and shred clothing.

20And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

The king's cry is full of anguish mixed with a modest dose of hope. Sleep deprivation and tears made the cry compelling. What do we find in the king's cry? Notice the **title he assigns to the**

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Prophet. “servant of the living God.” The question does not go to God’s willingness to save Daniel but His ability to save Daniel.

The title is telling—servant of the living God—as opposed to the dead and lifeless deities that lay claim to Medo-Persian loyalties. And make no mistake about it. False gods are life-less.

Deuteronomy 5:26; “For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?”

Isaiah 37:15-20 contains the brief but beautiful prayer of Hezekiah about the faithfulness of God who dwells between the Cherubim; God alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; the maker of heaven and earth, the God who hears, the God who sees, the God who hears and sees the words of enemies; who casts the gods made of stone and wood into the fire and destroys them. He prays that God will deliver him and his people from the hands of Sennacherib. The Lord answers the prayer by promising after three years ravaged Judah would return to normal and that Jerusalem would be spared (Isaiah 37:30).

Was he familiar with the events of chapter 3? Had he heard strange tales of the deliverance from the fiery furnace? Was he aware of the bold statement made by Daniel’s friends; “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king” (Daniel 3:7).

Did the king wonder if Daniel had displeased God in some way?

Daniel's Divine Deliverance And Protector (vv.21-23)

21 Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever!

22 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.”

23 Now the king was exceedingly 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 injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

How has Daniel spent the night?

What would be the first words out of your mouth for the person who placed you in the lion’s den?

What is Daniel’s testimony concerning God’s divine Protector? There are several things I want to bring to your attention.

1. The protector is powerful: God.

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2. The protector is personal: My God.
3. The protector is present: His Angel.

I am fairly convinced that God sent Jesus in a pre-incarnate manifestation. The Psalmist said; "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them" (34:7).

The Lord could have killed the lions. Or the Lord could have caused the lions mouths to remain shut. But there is more. The Lord is present with Daniel in the den. The pre-incarnate Jesus will keep company with Daniel in the night. This same Jesus was present in the fire with Daniel's friends (chapter 3:24-25).

The Lord sent His angel to protect Daniel.

Daniel lists three reasons why God in his grace and mercy delivers Daniel. The first; "because I was found innocent before Him". The second; "I have done no wrong before you" that is Daniel's actions have brought no harm to the king and three "because he believed in his God" (v. 22). Innocent. Harmless. Faithful.

Scholars are divided over the meaning "I was found innocent before Him".

Some suggest this is a reference to Daniel's manner of living or life-style. And what do we know about that life-style? In the opening chapter Daniel determines to live a life of separation from sin and devotion to God (chapter 1:8-16). In the evil plot against Daniel his enemies can find neither fault or charge" (6:4-5); and Daniel is arrested for praying (vv.10-11). Others see this as a reference to Daniel's firm resolve to trust God in these most difficult circumstances.

Perhaps it includes elements of all these things: Separation from sin; devotion to God; dedication to excellence; submission and trust in God's sovereignty.

Daniel was not the source of harm to the king. The government officials who plotted to manipulate the king (law) to destroy Daniel were the real culprits.

Don't miss the repeated phrase; "the king orders Daniel to be taken up and out" and "so Daniel was taken up and out" (v.23).

There was an end to the trial.

What happens when Daniel is delivered? The king was exceedingly glad when he discovers that Daniel was safe and sound (v.23). What else happens? Daniel was taken up out of the den. Daniel is removed from the place of danger. ". . .and no injury whatever was found on him".

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The king inspects Daniel for claw marks or bite marks. “Plop, plop, fizz-fizz—oh what a relief it is”. The king is relieved.

In spite of their best efforts to kill Daniel—God is not finished with Daniel. Man's law on earth held no sway in heaven. We are reminded of Paul's convincing cry in the book of Romans; “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (8:1). The writer of Proverbs confirms this; “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand” (19:21).

What happens when the miracle doesn't show up?

My friend Lee Strobel made a comment about his book; “Case For Miracles”.

“As I was researching this question, I realized that any credible book on miracles must deal with the ones that never happen. Many people have implored God to meet an urgent need in their lives—with no miracle forthcoming. There are biblical reasons that we shouldn't be surprised when everyone isn't healed in each and every instance. Even Jesus didn't heal automatically. Nevertheless, the emotional punch of this issue still stings.”

The children of Israel were delivered from the fiery furnace. Daniel was delivered in the lion's den. What about me? What about you? Where's our miracle?

What if there is no miracle? Can we still trust God?

One of the great themes of the Bible is trusting God. In Proverbs 3:5-6 we read; “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths*”.

Daniel's intellect went far beyond his peers. If anyone had the right to lean on his own understanding it was Daniel. **Daniel does not attempt to think his way out of danger. Daniel will trust the Lord with all his heart. He will allow God to make a path out of the lion's pit.**

Let me be clear. The Bible does not trivialize or denigrate understanding. Understanding is important. **Obedience is more important.** We can never understand everything. But God understands everything completely. Understanding is important. **But trusting God is more important.**

What does it mean to trust the Lord? It means we seek the Lord with all our heart. We believe He is powerful; personal and present. **We seek His will in all we do. We fear (respect) him and turn from evil and we will gain renewed strength.** We honor Him with our substance. We do not despise his discipline; or lose sight of good planing. We refuse to wrong our neighbor and we refuse to envy the wicked.

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One again the writer of Psalms gives us insight (37:5); “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.”

Conclusion

We all make choices. And when we have an important decision to make we sometimes feel like we can't trust anybody—even God. **The Lord truly knows what is best for us. I am not suggesting we omit careful thinking or belittle our God given ability to reason; but we should be careful to trust our own ideas and fail to consider God's instructions and God's will as it is revealed in God's Word. Bring your problem to the Lord. Be open to His instruction. He will lead you and guide you and make your path straight. Believe in His power and His presence and His promises.**