

“GODLINESS WINS IN THE END”
Lessons From Babylon Series #7
Daniel 6:11-28 March 20 & 21, 2021

Daniel was in a tough spot. The decree of King Darius stated, that *“for the next thirty days anyone who requested anything from any god or from any man except you (King Darius), would be thrown into a pit filled with lions”* (Dan. 6:12). Yet Daniel had worshipped his God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, all of his youth, and had continued to do so after he had been brought to Babylon as a captive under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. Like his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, he had stood strong in his faith, abiding by the commands and Laws of the Lord God Almighty. He was not about to change his ways and abandon his worship of God at that point in his life.

So, as we learned last week, *“when Daniel learned that the order had been signed, he went home. In an upstairs room of his house there were windows that faced toward Jerusalem. There, just as he had always done, he knelt down at the open windows and prayed to God three times a day”* (Dan. 6:10). He was purposely disobeying the law of King Darius because he was putting God on the throne of heaven, not king Darius. Daniel’s allegiance to God would remain strong no matter who was in power as the king, and no matter what decree came out of the king’s throne room.

The ones that had convinced Darius to sign the order knew that Daniel would not comply with the new law, so they watched him closely, maybe even on that first day of the thirty days after the decree was signed. When they observed him at his window praying to God, but not to Darius, they had the evidence they needed to convict him of breaking the law of King Darius.

But a den of lions did not worry Daniel. D. L. Moody says it like this, “He would rather be in the lions’ den **with God** than out of it without Him. And it is a thousand times better, friends, to be in the lions’ den **with God** and hold to our principles than to be out of it and have money but no principles. I pity those men who have gained their money dishonestly; I pity those men who have obtained their positions in life dishonestly; I pity any politician who has acquired his office dishonestly. How their consciences lash them!

“And how the Word of God lashes such men. *“Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire (James 5:3).* It does not pay to be false; it pays to be true. It is best to be honest, even if it means having little money in your pocket and little position in the world. It is best to have God with us and to know that we are on the right side.”¹

Oh, the worry and concern and anguish we can put ourselves under if we relinquish our lives over to the control of other people! If you are so concerned about what others are thinking about you, your trust in God is too small. If you are worried about what might happen to you because you go against the popular demand of the times, you’re not putting your trust in the Lord God Almighty! Had Daniel given into fear about what might happen to him, certainly he would have taken the advice of those around him and skipped town for the next thirty days. Or he would have closed up his house when it was time to spend time in prayer.

But Daniel’s whole life was built upon the foundation of God being greater than any man or any government. God is the Ultimate Authority of the Universe, so no matter what person determines that they are greater than God, they simply will not have the same power and authority that our God of the Universe has. That person may *think* they are great, but human life is only so long, and there is no human who has ascended to take God’s place. So to be afraid of abandoning God was Daniel’s greatest concern.

It could well have been that Daniel had learned the words of David in Psalm 58 while growing up. It could have been that he took courage in the words, *“When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. In God, whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? All day long they distort my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They attack, they lurk, they watch my steps, as they have waited to take my life. Because of their wickedness, will there be an escape for them? In anger make the peoples fall down, God!”* (Psalm 58:3-7)

¹ (D. L. Moody, *Daniel, Man of God; Being a Man of Character in a Babylonian World*, [Abbotsford, WI: Aneko Press, Revised Edition, 2018] pg. 67)

Daniel had experienced miraculous deliverance before very soon after they had arrived in Babylon. He had heard Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah tell him about God protecting them from the fiery furnace when they rebelled against worshipping the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had made. Daniel knew the many times that God had miraculously delivered his people from annihilation and conquest. He had learned the accounts of God wiping out the Midianites when Gideon and 300 men took on and defeated the army of 135,000 (Judges 7-8). He had learned of God leading Joshua and the people of Israel to take the land of “*the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites*” (Exodus 23:23). He knew about God’s miraculous deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12) and how Pharaoh’s army was destroyed in the Red Sea (Exodus 14). Many more times God delivered His people from the hands of those who would seek to do them harm. If God could do all of these marvelous things to protect His people, those who remained faithful to Him, couldn’t He protect Daniel from an attack of lions as he stood true to his faith in God? In that, Daniel put his faith and trust. So when the king gave the command to have Daniel arrested, there was no fear in him. He had complete confidence in the power of God to defend him and protect him, even in the face of powerful, hungry lions.

But this was no vengeful king, on his way to wipe out all of the Jews. Darius did his best to respect the people in all of the empire. Yet he had been tricked into signing a law that suddenly focused on one particular group of people – those who were faithful to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

As often happens in leadership positions, we don’t take the time to think through everything before we act. We trust the advisors around us and desire to do what is right in their eyes. But laws can be put into place at the whim of a leader without fully recognizing the total impact that that law will have on those it controls. So without realizing the harm it can do, a new law can devastate a whole generation of people. And in the laws of the Medes and Persians, once that law was enacted, there was no changing it. So it is important to fully evaluate every decision made as a leader, lest we make huge mistakes at the peril of those around us.

Darius realized this too late as the new law he just signed was the signing of Daniel's death sentence, as well as all of the faithful Jews in the empire. Even though Daniel was his most valuable man in his whole empire, even though Daniel prayed for him and gave his all for the king, the law was the law and Darius was compelled to forsake Daniel. There was absolutely nothing he could do to reverse that decision. All that was left to do was to give the command to empower the enemies of Daniel to fulfill the law. Daniel had to be put into the lions' den.

It's like a pastor who gives her all for the love of the church she serves. She serves faithfully for five years at that congregation, bringing new life and energy to the people in her ministry. She faithfully brings the Gospel message to the people and they grow deeper in their own faith under her leadership. Yet the pastor serves in a denomination that has the power to terminate her position at any moment, even breaking their own rules in order to keep that congregation under their control. What does this pastor have left? She is at their mercy and under their control. What is she to do, then, when the pink slip shows up on her computer telling her that she has only one more Sunday to worship with her beloved people? What can she do?

Or like a vice president of a large corporation who has devoted his whole career into bettering that company. He's done everything right, expanding the business, refining the production of their product so that it's more efficient, multiplying the number of branch offices all over the country, hiring hundreds more employees. But the Board of Directors suddenly makes the decision that they can no longer tolerate people of faith, who live their convictions and are open with their witness. They decide that this vice-president has to go so they concoct new policy for the company that states that anyone found with a Bible in their office is out the door. And the vice president is the Director of Adult Ministries in his church. What's he to do? He has been discipling a number of young men new to the company, and has been leading a "lunch-break" Bible study for years.

You see, when you have a firm commitment to your faith in Jesus Christ, there are those in our world today who will try to defeat you. They will look at you and deem it necessary that you have to go,

so they will employ whatever means they can to oust you or even destroy you. What do you do when the boss says, “Either give up your Bible or give up your job?” What do you do when the School Board tells you, “Stop praying at the center of the field after football games or you’re off the coaching staff?” What do you do when the teacher gives you an F on your report of a famous person of history and you chose Jesus Christ? What do you do when your city or state tells you to limit the number of people coming to your church? What do you do when the courts tell you that you have to make cakes for a group that believes differently than your convictions of what the Bible says is wrong? Do you give in? Do you give up on God and conform to the demands of the secular society around you?

When you are in the position of being put into the lions’ den, don’t give up your faith in the Lord God Almighty. Don’t turn your back on God and conform to the ways of the world. Stand strong in your faith and trust that the Lord will turn even the most horrible of situations into one that will bring honor and glory to Him. Listen to how Daniel handled his situation. This is Daniel 6:19-28. (READ Dan. 6:19-28)

As Daniel was led to the lions’ den, there was no fear in him. “He walked with a firm and steady step, bearing himself like a conqueror. He didn’t tremble. His knees were firm and didn’t knock together.

“The light of heaven shone in his calm face, and all heaven was interest in that aged man. Disgraced on earth, he was probably the most popular man in heaven. Angels delighted in him; how they loved him up there! He had stood firm; he had not deviated; he had not turned away from the God of the Bible. And he walked with a giant’s stride to the entrance of the lions’ den, where they cast him in. They rolled a great stone to the mouth of the den, and the king put his seal upon it. And so, the law was kept.”²

But God did not allow the enemies to have their victory. Though Daniel was now in the den of lions, the angel of God came to protect him and wrapped the mouths of those lions with heavenly duct

² (D. L. Moody, *Daniel, Man of God*, pg. 70)

tape so that they could not bite him. There was nothing that the lions could do to Daniel, for God prevented any harm from inflicting Daniel. So at his regular time of prayer, Daniel probably knelt next to one of the lions, put his hands on its back and prayed prayers of thanksgiving and honor and glory to God for using him in such a way as to make Him known to the people of Babylon. And he probably prayed for the king and those who had put him there, asking God to touch their lives. And when he finished, Daniel probably slept against one of those big beasts, keeping warm from the animal's body heat.

When you trust in God, when you let Jesus live in you and through you, miraculous things can happen. You might find yourself promoted to the president of your own corporation. You might be reinstated as the pastor of that congregation when the church decides to leave the denomination. You might be found touching the lives of the whole student body as they come to you for encouragement and support outside of school. You might have influenced the heart of that teacher who read your report so that at a later date they give their heart to Jesus. You might find the need to have more worship services because people hearing about your church being open flood your doors. You may find business exploding because you stood your ground on God's guidelines. There's no telling what God might do through you when you stand your ground on faith in Jesus Christ. There's no limit to what God might do to protect you and exalt you because you did not waver in your faith. When you stand up for God, He stands up for you and provides you with more than you had before. When you stand firm in your faith, He will use that to bring Him honor and glory.

But now look at what happened to those who falsely accused Daniel. *"Then the king gave orders to arrest all the men who had accused Daniel, and he had them thrown, together with their wives and children, into the pit filled with lions. Before they even reached the bottom of the pit, the lions pounced on them and broke all their bones"* (Dan. 6:24).

You see, "as the proverb says, *'He who digs a pit will fall into it* (Proverbs 26:27). The very ones who falsely accused Daniel were themselves given the same fate, only divine protection was not

afforded to them. They were on their own, and their destruction was final. *“For the Lord loves justice and does not forsake His godly ones; They are preserved forever, but the descendants of the wicked will be cut off”* (Psalm 37:28).

People of God, “let us come out from the world; let us trample it under our feet; let us be true to God; let us stand in rank, and keep step, and fight boldly for **our King**, [Jesus]. Then our ‘crowning time’ shall come by and by. Yes, the reward will come, and then it may be said of ... us: *“O [people] of high esteem”* (Dan. 10:19). [People], your moral character is more than money. It is worth more than the honor of the world, which is fleeting and will soon be gone. It is worth more than earthly position, which is transient and will soon be gone. But to have God with you and to be with God – what a grand position! It is an eternal inheritance.”³

God delights when we stand up for Him, even if He does not intercede in our lives miraculously. God desires that we have such faith in His Son, Jesus Christ that our lives shine out the radiance of His glory through us. God desires that we all be people of high esteem, regardless of how the world looks at us. We are called to live for Him so that by the way we live, the way we treat others, the way we deal in business, the way we speak to one another, and the way that we present ourselves, all radiate with the touch of Jesus upon us.

As we find ourselves in sticky, difficult situations, God sees our need and supplies us with the strength and encouragement we need to walk with Him. He comes to walk beside us so that we may remain true to Him. We are never alone in our struggles when we trust in the Lord our God. So let us stand out to our world as very different people.

As we close our study of Daniel 1-6, let me lift up a few more verses that are important to us as we live in a Babylonian world. Daniel 11:32 tells us, *“...the people who know their God will be strong and take action.”* Grow in your faith in the Lord God and He will provide you with the strength to live for Him. No matter what position or place of status you might have, live for the Lord.

³ (D. L. Moody, *Man of God*, pg. 71)

Daniel 12:2-3 goes on to tell us, *“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. And those who have insight will shine like the glow of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”* We are encouraged to let our influence make a difference in the world, today, and tomorrow, based upon our faith.

You see, the ones in high position, the great ones of this world, will not have a lasting light to shine in this world. Oh, it may shine for a little while, but their light will end in darkness. They will be forgotten in the sands of time. The philosophers, the scientists, the archaeologists, those who actively work against God will die and their names will rot in ruin.

But those who live for the Lord, the people of the Lord, shine out like stars in the heavens. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah and all those who actively live faithful lives continue to live in the hearts and minds of people as they read the record of their faithfulness.

So it will be for all those who stand strong in their faith. Those of little education can shine like the sun if they live for the Lord. Those with little in their pockets, or less to their name, can shine forever as they keep their lives founded upon the Word of God and trust in Him in all their ways. Those that teach righteousness are the ones who will shine, not the ones in high positions of power.

So it is up to every person to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, to be teachers of righteousness, for it is too much for a pastor to do alone. As we work together joining our lights into a spotlight for the Lord Jesus, we reach out into the world to bring others into the light of the Lord. Godliness makes a difference in our world today, and many are attracted to the ones who live in it.

So many are still in the darkness of this world. They need to see a new example of what happens when we live by faith in Jesus Christ. But if we conform to the ways of this world, if we abandon our faith in God, then our faith will have no meaning for them, and we will miss the chance to lead them to the Lord. Live faithfully so that you may shine for the Lord.

Let's pray: Father, it is so hard at times to live for You. We live in a time, much like Daniel did,

that calls us to abandon our trust in You and conform to the ways of this world. But there is no hope living in the ways of this world, for it only leads unto death. Give us the courage and the strength to live faithfully following Your ways, so that we, too, may be found approved by God. Allow us to shine like the stars in heaven as we stand strong in Jesus Christ, not fearing what the world may do to us, but boldly claiming the ways of Jesus all of our lives. Then make us witnesses to those around us of the joy of following You, so that all we do may bring glory to You, in Jesus' precious and holy Name. AMEN.