

Giving Thanks to God July 26, 2020

Daniel 6:4-10

4 So the presidents and the satraps tried to find grounds for complaint against Daniel in connection with the kingdom. But they could find no grounds for complaint or any corruption, because he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption could be found in him. 5 The men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God." 6 So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict (NRSV).

Today we are going back to the Old Testament prophecy of Daniel. Babylonian leaders are envious of Daniel but are unable to find any fault with him. So, they set up a trap buy using Daniel's devotion to God against him. If you pray to anyone other than the king then you get thrown into the lion's den.

As you know Daniel takes place during the exile. Daniel is captured and taken to Babylon. He is smart, skilled, handsome, and without blemish. He is selected for top level civil service training. His most unique characteristic is that in spite of his captivity and setbacks, Daniel continues to give thanks to God. It is due to his devotion that Daniel is favored by God. He is elevated to the highest position. As a consequence he is hated by jealous Babylonian leaders who resent his foreign background and political success. Throughout his captivity he remains faithful to God, continuously gives thanks to God and refuses to participate in anything that goes against his devotion to God.

When we get to chapter six, king Nebuchadnezzar is history and king Belshazzar has been killed. Now Darius the Mede is reigning as the king of Babylon. He sets up a political structure where he is on top as the king and under him are three presidents and under them are 120 satraps. Daniel is now one of the three presidents at the very top of the political structure, directly under the king. Daniel, being highly favored by God, distinguishes himself above all the others. So, the King plans to appoint him over the entire kingdom. This presents a problem for Daniel and brings us to today's Scripture.

The other presidents and the satraps plan to sabotage Daniel's success. However, Daniel is too good to be charged with anything. He is faithful, there is no corruption, and there is no negligence. So, they devise a plot to get rid of Daniel by using his devotion to God against him. They know that Daniel can't help but express thanks to God and will pray to God regularly no matter what. So, they go to the king to establish an ordinance. If anyone should pray to anyone other than you dear king then they should be thrown into the den of lions. Darius the Mede agrees to this because he does not recognize the manipulation, the conspiracy, and the underhanded politics involved with their proposal. He establishes the order and signs the document. It is now law and cannot be revoked.

Daniel would have known that the law was established and signed but Daniel did not pray to king. Daniel continued giving thanks to God. The conspirators caught him praying to

God and took him to the king and insisted that this is your law and Daniel does not honor you. The king became distressed over this because Daniel was his number one confidant and he did not want any harm to come to Daniel. But the conspirators insisted that the order cannot be changed. So, Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. The king was worried and could not eat or sleep. At the break of day the king hurried to the den of lions and found Daniel to be just fine. That is because the God of Daniel is the one true God and has protected Daniel from harm. The king was happy and realized the evil doing of the conspirators so he commanded that they be thrown into the den of lions where they faced the worst case scenario. Then the king recognized that the God of Daniel is the one true God and issued a decree for all the people to fear (have reverence for) the God of Daniel. All the people in the kingdom then gave thanks to God. The king proclaimed that God is alive, will endure forever, God's kingdom will never be destroyed, and God's dominion has no end.

The contemporary lesson for us is how Daniel applies to us in modern society. Daniel remained faithful to God, even in the face of danger when his own life was at risk. This lesson on devotion follows Christians throughout history. Ever since Jesus was persecuted, Christians have been persecuted from the first century to today. Jesus taught his disciples to remain faithful to God and he also informed them that they would be handed over, tortured, and killed. Then what Jesus said is actually happening in our society today. Society will become depraved, many will fall away, false prophets will lead people astray, people will hate one another, lawlessness will increase, and love will grow cold. Then he delivers the good news. "The one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mat. 24:9-13).

The lesson from Daniel is one of hope for anyone going through hardship by providing a Bible hero that people can relate to. The one who goes through hardship and remains faithful to the end, in spite of difficulties, will be saved. We see that our God is the one true God that favors the faithful and protects them from harm. We need to be giving thanks to God. We are fortunate today that there is no persecution for our faith here in America. Whereas, throughout history many were persecuted and refused to fall away, today many fall away simply out of convenience. We need to be giving thanks to God for we all have received God's great gift of love and care.