

## Sermon – 22/07/2007 am

### Daniel Faces Death

Study Text: Daniel 2:14-23

The king of Babylon was ‘angry and very furious’. The ruler of this vast kingdom had a dream which troubled him. Lack of trust in his own advisors led him to make the totally unreasonable demand that they tell him not only the interpretation but the dream itself. This heathen king then threatened them with death if they failed to come up with the answer. In fact he had already started killing his wise men (2:13).

Daniel and his young Jewish friends had recently graduated and joined the king’s service. Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard came knocking on their door also. They were only young but were now wise men advising the king. Would they be executed along with the other wise men, the astrologers and magicians of Babylon? The other wise men told the king that no human being could tell the king the content of his dream. What he was asking them was impossible. Or was it?

Abraham’s wife Sarah thought it was impossible for her to have a baby when she was so old – and humanly speaking it was. But the Lord said to her *is anything too hard for the Lord?* (Genesis 18:14). Is anything impossible for God? Did Daniel believe that the situation in Babylon was hopeless? A humanly orchestrated tragedy was in progress. How would Daniel respond in the face of imminent death to himself and many others?

### Seek Information

When Arioch came to Daniel’s house to arrest him it seems that Daniel had not heard about the king’s order. The furious king was acting in haste. How did Daniel respond? Did he panic? Did he resist arrest? Did he threaten to take legal action? With counsel and wisdom, with humility and respect, Daniel asked the captain a question. *Why is the decree from the king so urgent/harsh?* (2:15).

The king was clearly being totally unreasonable and irrational, but Daniel did not say this. He acted and spoke with wisdom and tact. Remember that the Lord gave Daniel, and his friends, knowledge and wisdom. Here we see this ‘wisdom from above’ in action. Wisdom from above is peaceable and gentle (James 3:17). *A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger* (Proverbs 15:1).

What might ‘earthly wisdom’ have looked like in this circumstance? The king was clearly crazy. He had to be stopped. Was a plot to assassinate the king needed? Perhaps a street rally protesting against the king could be organised? Yes, a civil disobedience program; that would be the way to go. What did Ghandi call it – ‘non-violent protest’? One wonders if such a campaign would have been effective against the king of Babylon.

What would you have done in Daniel’s situation? Do you favour the ways of earthly wisdom or those of heavenly wisdom? What did Daniel do? He spoke to the captain with respect and tact as he sought more information about the king’s command.

Arioch responded favourably to Daniel's polite question. He did not have to explain the king's decision, and probably would not have if Daniel had confronted or abused him. Daniel's discretion and wisdom resulted in him getting the information he wanted. Armed with this information Daniel then took his next step – he went to the king.

Daniel went in and asked the king to *give him time that he might tell the king the interpretation* (2:16). God was certainly with Daniel at this moment. Here was a young man, a man barely out of his teens, a man under arrest and facing execution, going to speak to the king. Moreover the king was furious with his wise men, of whom Daniel was one.

From a human perspective Daniel was incredibly bold and brave. But going in the strength of the Lord as he did, he was simply being calm and confident. He promised the king to interpret his dream. Daniel believed that God knows all things, even the secrets of men's hearts. Daniel trusted God to reveal these secrets in a desperate time such as this.

Although Daniel's own life and that of his friends was under threat he was not simply acting to save his own skin. Such motivation might have led him to hide, or flee. Daniel had purposed in his heart to live an upright life and declare the truth of God. He determined to glorify God in this heathen land. Fearing God, Daniel did not fear man. In the strength of the Lord he did not even fear this raging king.

## Share In Prayer

Daniel was a man of prayer. It was his custom since his youth to pray three times a day (6:10). In chapter 9 one of his prayers is recorded. Time was short and Daniel had to deliver an interpretation. But for Daniel there was always time for prayer. It seems the busier he was the more time he spent in prayer – contrary to many people.

On returning from the palace Daniel shared all he had learnt with his friends and they prayed together. They sought *the mercies of the God of heaven concerning the (king's) secret* (2:18). This title 'God of heaven' is not common in Scripture, except during this time of the exile. Some think it is significant in the context of the Babylonians propensity to worship the sun, moon and stars.

*Let us therefore come boldly before the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need* (Hebrews 4:16). It is as if Daniel knew these words from the New Testament. With his friends he prayed to God for mercy.

Daniel prayed alone in his room but on this occasion he prayed with his God-fearing brothers. Corporate prayer is important. When Peter was arrested by King Herod the church came together and prayed earnestly for his safety (Acts 12:5). The church at Antioch fasted and prayed before sending Paul and Barnabas out as missionaries (Acts 13:3). God delights in the prayers of his people, and is especially pleased when they agree in prayer. Do you value prayer as much as Daniel did? Do you have a prayer partner or partners as Daniel did?

What was the outcome of this prayer of Daniel and his friends? They sought mercy from God in the desperate situation confronting Daniel and his friends, and lots of other men in Babylon. Have you ever prayed for mercy in this way? Have you been in a situation in which you could do nothing except rely up the mercy of God? Have you ever spoken to the Lord of your helpless condition? I am sure you have?

Daniel prayed specifically for the secret of the king's dream. He knew that God knows all things. He also knew that God was gracious and merciful. His prayer was that God would reveal the king's dream to him. Daniel had a vision in the night in which God did just that. God revealed to Daniel the king's dream and its interpretation (2:19).

## **Thanksgiving**

*So Daniel blessed the God of heaven (2:19).* Daniel was full of praise and thanksgiving when God answered his prayer. He had not yet gone to the king. He had not yet escaped the king's threat, but thanks flowed from his grateful heart. He knew that God was sovereign in this situation, not king Nebuchadnezzar. Do you believe that God is sovereign in all things in your life? Do you have any troubles at present? Have you brought the matter to the Lord in prayer believing that he is able and willing to help you?

Look at the wonderful words of praise that flow from Daniel's lips. Note that many lines begin with 'God' or 'He' for emphasis. God controls history, not nature itself or idols. How many people believe this today? Do you? God is all-powerful, he is all-wise; and what is amazing is his grace in revealing to Daniel the exclusively divine knowledge he requested. Do you know this amazing grace of God?

Some people do not get wisdom or strength from God because they do not ask. Remember the time you spend in prayer is not wasted time as the heathen think. He who asks receives. Jesus said 'ask and it will be given to you', a cup full and running over. Daniel believed this promise. Many say they are too busy to pray, too busy come to worship, yet they still expect God's blessing.

Some people do pray, and God answers their prayer, but they do not thank him. A student once told me how she had been to a healing service and her arm got better. 'Have you thanked the Lord?' I asked her. 'Are you now worshipping the Lord who you say healed you?' Many were praying for rain in recent days. The Lord has blessed us with rain, but who is giving thanks?

Let us, like Daniel, be filled with praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for all his blessing to us. You were in danger of death were you not, when the Lord reached out to save you? Has not God answered your prayer for salvation, for salvation from the wrath of God, from the penalty of sin? If you are a sinner saved by grace through faith your heart should be filled with thanksgiving today and everyday. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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