

DELIVERED FROM THE LIONS' DEN

"So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." Daniel 6:23.

When just a lad, perhaps about fourteen years of age, Daniel was taken captive and carried to Babylon. Daniel was not responsible for his captivity. Neither was it due to sin on his part. At the beginning of his captivity, he purposed in his heart that nothing would hinder God's glory through his life. He preferred to die rather than to permit his testimony for God to be marred by anything questionable or sinful.

Darius, the king, appointed one hundred twenty men as princes over his whole kingdom. Over these princes he set in authority three presidents, and over the entire group Daniel was placed. The favor of Daniel with the king fomented the seething jealousies of the presidents and princes. They called in the last reserve of their diabolical ingenuity for plans to get rid of him. Their chicanery devised a trap for him which centered in his religion. They said, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." What a compliment to Daniel! What a testimony to his integrity! What honor though they sought shame.

Daniel's enemies went to the king and flattered him by asking him to sign a decree binding all men to abstain from worshipping any god, or asking a petition of any god or man, except the king himself, for thirty days. The decree contained the stipulation that anyone violating it should be cast into the lions' den.

Daniel was unaffected by the decree. Knowing that when human laws are found to clash with the divine commands it is right to "obey God rather than man," Daniel continued, regardless of the consequences, to pray to his God three times a day, as had been his custom. He refused to be swayed by popular opinion. His religious convictions were not for sale. Even in the face of the lions' den, he refused to capitulate to a decree which interfered with his right to worship God. He refused to be coerced to do wrong, even by a king's decree. No earthly authority could tongue-tie Daniel's loyalty to his God. No stern decree could affect his rock-ribbed fidelity. In the discharge of his duty to God, Daniel had no real cause for dismay. He knew that God was with him. Having faithfully performed his duty, he submitted to the will of his enemies, committed himself to Him that judges righteously, and calmly left the event in His hands. Daniel was cast into the lions' den and "a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den." To his malicious enemies, that closed den meant to them the closing of Daniel's career.

"And the king went to his palace." But he did not go in peace. He was dreadfully and depressingly disturbed. He could not sleep. All through the night, because of the activity of his conscience, he imagined that he heard the crunching of bones in the jaws of the lions. To him his palace was a torture chamber that night. Early the next morning Darius arose and went in haste to the lions' den. Seemingly he did not doubt the disposition of Daniel's God to deliver him, but he questioned His ability to do so. To his surprise Daniel was still alive and unharmed. Daniel told him that God had sent His angel and had shut the lions' mouths so that they had not hurt him; Then the king ordered Daniel released from the den.

By this signal preservation of the life of Daniel among the lions, God displayed at once His power over the creatures of the forest which He had made, and His care over His servants when He calls upon them to suffer for His cause. Under the protection of God Daniel was as safe in the den of lions as he would have been in the palace, and under the protection of Darius.

"No manner of hurt was upon him, because he believed in his God." One obvious lesson in these words is that faith in God is the best protection. Had Daniel trusted in anything or anyone else he certainly would have perished; but because his faith was

in God he was delivered. Faith in God is our highest wisdom and truest safety. It is to be regretted that there are teachers who claim that faith in God, as a principle by which to live, is the obsolete conception of an unscientific and unenlightened day in the past.

I. Daniel's Faith in God.

"He believed in his God." This means far more than a bare assent to the fact of God's existence. Daniel "believed in his God" in the sense of sincere trust, reliance on Him for salvation and preservation, and living in dependence on Him.

1. Its clarity.

He was clear about God's wisdom, as we see in connection with the king's dream. He was clear about God's sovereignty and foreknowledge, as we see in his interpretation of the Image. He was clear about God's holiness and faithfulness. Where did he get all this clear knowledge? He got it from the Scriptures, and from a firsthand experience in dealing with God. He was a man who knew what he believed and why he believed it. What a need there is for such clear-cut faith today! If we would have such a clear, intelligent faith, we must know the God of the Bible. As someone has said we should, "Know it in the head; stow it in the heart; show it in the life; sow it in the world."

2. Its loyalty.

Daniel lived at a time when the true faith was unpopular and many people were proving disloyal to the old standards. But amid the surrounding unbelief, the young man Daniel remained loyal. Oh, for more Daniels today. Don't sing

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the cross"

and then scamper away at the first rifle crack from the enemy lines! It is hard to be a loyal Christian; that is one of the reasons why it is grand!

"Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!"

3. Its fixity.

"He believed in his God." There seemed to be no way of escape apart from compromise; but to a man of Daniel's faith death was far better than compromise! He would be true to his God whatever the consequences, like the young man who gave up his wealth and high position that he might preach Christ to the Cannibals, and then went forth with the motto, "The will of God, nothing more, nothing else, at all costs!" Christ needs the bravest and noblest that is in us! Let us stand fast and firm for Him!

II. God's Care of Daniel.

"No manner of hurt was found upon him." There are four things which impress us about Daniel's preservation.

1. Its miraculousness.

Never had there been a tastier morsel in that lions' den than Daniel, yet "no manner of hurt was found upon him". Why didn't the lions consume Daniel? He tells us why: "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths." God had intervened in this miraculous way to vindicate Daniel.

2. Its instructiveness.

God did not save Daniel from being put into the lions' den; but He saved him in it, and brought him through the ordeal without any manner of hurt being found upon him. Faith was tried and tested, but it was also honored and vindicated. The Word of God gives no guarantee that Christ's people shall be immune from trials and testings. On the contrary, it indicates that they may suffer the more. Yet there is the unfailing guarantee that faith in Christ will never fail to be honored. God allows His Daniels to be put into the den, but He sends His angel and preserves them. He does not save us from, but He saves us in, and brings us through.

3. Its completeness.

"No manner of hurt was found upon him." God has not promised to give protection from all physical or mental adversity. There is a higher form of protection than that.

4. Its convincingness,

When Daniel was delivered from that lions' den, and Darius actually saw that "no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God," he became absolutely convinced that Daniel's God was the one true God Who ruled over all. To show you that Darius was convinced that Daniel's God was the true God, he issued the following decree: "Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions" Daniel 6:25-27.

As we see Daniel being cast into that den of lions, we cannot but exclaim, "What an ordeal!" But as we see Darius publishing that edict we cannot but exclaim, "What a sequel!" We never know what great thing may come of it if we stand firm in our faith despite temptations and persecutions and adversities. The eyes of men are upon us, and if we are true to our faith God will certainly bless our witness for Him. Let us resolve, then, that by the aid of the Holy Spirit we will trust God as Daniel did, and in the end it will be said, even of us: "No manner of hurt was found upon them, because they believed in their God."