

November 17, 2013

Title: Daniel, Also an Actor of the Lion's Den [Daniel III]

Scripture: Hebrews 11:33

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Greetings in peace. Today, we reflect upon Hebrews 11:33.

"33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions."

Today's topic is "Daniel, Also an Actor of the Lion's Den."

Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, yet he spent the night unharmed and emerged the next day without a single blemish (Heb 11:33b). Why then did God shut the mouths of the lions all night? Was it merely to protect Daniel through this incredible miracle? No, it was not solely for that reason.

Daniel 6:7 reveals that Daniel was well aware of the decree established by the king: "Anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to the king, shall be thrown into the lions' den." Despite knowing this, Daniel continued to pray three times a day, kneeling and giving thanks to God while facing Jerusalem, as described in Daniel 6:10. It is true that God closed the mouths of the lions in response to Daniel's faithful actions. However, Daniel's faith was not the sole reason for this miraculous intervention.

The full context of Daniel in the Lion's Den goes like this: According to Daniel 6:3, Daniel was so distinguished above all other high officials and satraps because of his exceptional qualities that King Darius planned to set him over the whole kingdom. This favoritism caused jealousy and envy among the other administrators and satraps. They tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could not find any corruption or fault because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Daniel 6:4 states: "At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges

against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent."

The administrators and satraps concluded, as written in verse 5, "If we cannot find any fault in Daniel concerning the law of his God, then we shall not be able to accuse him of anything." Ultimately, they decided to target Daniel's continual practice of praying to God three times a day and began to devise a plan. As verse 7 says, "For the next thirty days, anyone who prays to any god or human other than the king shall be thrown into the lions' den." They presented this decree to the king, who, unaware of their scheme, readily signed it. Regardless of the decree banning prayers to any entity other than the king, Daniel continued to pray to God three times a day, just as he always had.

The officials accused Daniel before the king, as described in Daniel 6:13: "Then they said to the king, 'Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.'" The king was greatly distressed upon hearing this and sought ways to save Daniel. He tried to delay the execution until sunset. However, as verse 15 states, the other officials collectively pressured him, shouting, "The decree that the king has established and the law that has been sealed by the king's signet cannot be altered, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed. You must enforce the decree, Your Majesty."

What could the king do? Overwhelmed by the insistence of his people, he had no choice but to command that the decree be enforced. Consequently, Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, as stated in verse 16: "So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den." In this critical moment, the king spoke some unexpected and very significant words, revealing why this incident occurred, as noted in the latter part of verse 16: "The king said to Daniel, 'May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!'" These words reflected the king's true feelings towards Daniel. Though he had signed the decree at his officials' insistence, he had not imagined it would

lead to this outcome. Had he anticipated that Daniel would be ensnared by such a ludicrous scheme, he would not have signed the decree forbidding prayers to any other god or person.

While placing Daniel in the lion's den, the king said, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you." Then he returned to his palace and fasted all night. Unlike other nights when music played and feasts were held, that night he stopped the music and did not sleep at all; he stayed awake the entire night.

The next morning, the king got up at the break of dawn and hurried to the lion's den. In verse 20, it is recorded: "When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?'" The king shouted this, hoping that Daniel was still alive, though he feared that nothing of him might remain. In his deep concern, he approached the den, hoping that Daniel's God had saved him. And what a response he received! In verse 21, Daniel's answer came: "May the king live forever." It was clearly Daniel's voice. Continuing in verse 22, Daniel said, "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions." Verse 23 records, "The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. When Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God." This was seen as a testament to Daniel being protected through his trust in God.

The phrase "because he had trusted in his God" in verse 23 does not simply mean seeking God's help in a moment of crisis, pleading, "God, please save me." Rather, the term "trusted" reflects Daniel's consistent daily actions, continuing to kneel three times a day to pray and give thanks to God as he had done before, despite the royal decree. This ongoing devotion is what is meant by "trusting" in God.

Thus, the "trust" mentioned in the latter half of verse 23 indicates that Daniel always relied on God. This trust and consistent devotion led to his miraculous deliverance from the lion's den. It wasn't a last-minute plea for salvation but a

testament to Daniel's lifelong dedication and unwavering faith in serving God.

The phrase "he had trusted in his God" is not something Daniel said about himself but rather an objective assessment given by the scripture about Daniel. Even the foreign king and his officials recognized this about Daniel. After witnessing the miracle of his survival in the lion's den, they acknowledged, "Indeed, your God, whom you always serve, has rescued you."

Here is another astonishing fact to consider. There were those who opposed Daniel, those who accused the man who trusted in God. We must focus our attention on how these accusers were treated by God. The contrast between the one who trusts in God and the one who accuses is starkly evident. Following the miraculous event in the lion's den, if we look at Daniel 6:24, we see that King Darius had those who had accused Daniel, along with their families, thrown into the very same lion's den. What happened then? They did not even reach the floor of the den before they were devoured by the lions. The lions were so hungry that they could not wait for the accusers to fall into the den and leaped up to catch them in mid-air. It is recorded in verse 24 that the lions crushed their bones and swallowed them so completely that not a trace of them remained.

Indeed, what I am about to tell you is the fundamental reason why God performed miracles. It also means that God performed miracles precisely for this reason. Like Daniel, those who trust in God were able to receive His protection in times of crisis. On the other hand, those who defied God or made life difficult for those who trusted in Him, like the administrators and satraps of Babylon, not only failed to receive protection in times of crisis but were also destroyed. The Bible records these two cases side by side to make this fact clear. It was with this intention that God performed miracles.

Reflecting on the true purpose of the miracle of Daniel in the lions' den, we can see that Daniel was merely a model of one who trusts in God. He was just an actor playing a role, not the main character of the miracle as most people would commonly assume. Daniel was merely one part of achieving the true

purpose of the miracle.

Lets consider the following example:

King Darius issued a decree to all the peoples and nations in every language. This is from Daniel 6:25. "King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: 'May you have abundant peace.'" King Darius was acting according to God's will to spread the word of God throughout the world. This was the effect of the miracle that God had wrought.

In Daniel 6:26, King Darius continues to proclaim, "I decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel." This statement clearly shows that it is not Daniel who is the main actor, but God Himself. The latter part of verse 26 states, "For He is the living God and He endures forever; His kingdom will not be destroyed, His dominion will never end." Through the king's authority, God was able to declare who He is to the whole world. This was precisely God's intention behind the miracle of the lions' den. Who could deny this?

As I mentioned earlier, in the miracle of the lions' den, Daniel merely served as a model of one who trusts in God. He co-starred with the lions. The true protagonist of this event was not Daniel. The lions, like Daniel, played their assigned roles faithfully. Despite being very hungry, they did not harm Daniel, who would have been easy prey. However, they crushed the bones of those who defied God and did not trust in Him, thus fulfilling their role. Once again, both the lions used in this miracle and Daniel, who participated in it, performed their roles exceptionally well.

God brought Daniel and his friends to Babylon from their youth. In Daniel 1:3-4, it is recorded that they were to select from the Israelites "some of the royal family and the nobility—young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace." Daniel and his friends, even in the foreign land of Babylon, continued to trust in God and led lives devoted to prayer. They were thankful to God, who had arranged the circumstances for

them to live this way.

God consistently sided with Israel and its people, who served Him. He rescued them in times of crisis. Furthermore, He used lions to crush and destroy the nations and governors who schemed and plotted against His people. This was a demonstration to those who did not believe in the nature of God. It underscores that the central message of the miracle in the lions' den was to show all people that God is a protector of His people from unjust forces.

Let's Pray.

"Father God,

Every time we encounter the miracle of the lions' den and the fiery furnace, we remember Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, focusing only on the protection they received. We have wanted to receive the same protection from You, God, that they had received, without considering the true meaning behind the miracles You performed, and only paying attention to the heroes of these miracles. We have tried to replicate what Daniel and his friends did to receive blessings, but in doing so, when could we have truly encountered You, Lord?

Oh, Lord!

We have come to understand that You performed these miracles to protect Your kingdom and Your people from worldly powers. Now, with a new understanding of Your true intentions, we embrace the Scriptures anew. We are profoundly grateful that among the many nations and peoples of the world, You choose to stand by us, the vulnerable, and protect us. Please continue to shield us from the harshness of the world until we reach heaven. We offer our thanks and prayers in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen, amen.

