

Daniel 6 - John Karmelich

Hi everybody. Time for a challenge! Teaching a passage of the bible most of us know well. It's a trick to teach what people know well without having them mentally tune out! To me the secret's to focus on how such passages apply to our lives. For this passage, the underlying issue is about trusting God when a situation is beyond our control. It's about continuing to be a witness for Him in spite of whatever it is we must face. In life we must make the best decisions we can and assume God is not going to react in a miraculous way. What we need to remember is the outcome isn't as significant as being a good witness for God in our life. OK enough stalling let's focus on a passage most of us know really well:

The text is one of the most famous bible stories: "Daniel and the Lion's Den". Again the great lesson is about trusting God in an impossible situation! When this story occurred Daniel was in his 80's as a best guess. He was still working as a top government official. Like what's often the case other leaders were jealous of his success so they set up a trap to get rid of him. These unnamed other men went to the king and asked for a decree that nobody could pray to anyone but the king himself. It was common then for kings to think of themselves as deities. Most likely, Daniel heard about it and went back to worshiping God. Those other leaders spied on Daniel. His punishment was to be tossed in a den of lions to end his life. When that event occurred God did a miracle and I picture Daniel cuddled up with the lions as they slept soundly together! The next morning he was pulled out. His accusers were killed by being thrown in that same pit themselves.

OK John cute story, and again, most of us knew this story since childhood. Obviously many have died as martyrs for Jesus, so the point isn't we'll automatically be rescued from impossible situations if we're trusting God for our salvation. I'd argue the lesson for us is simply about trusting God in situations that are beyond our control. It's always best to live as if God is going to do nothing and everything is up to us. We can pray for anything but it's His world and He can do what He wants when He wants. Yes I've seen my share of miracles as well as my share of horrible suffering by devout believers. I can't explain how He works! I just know we're to live as if God can do anything but it's still up to us to be a witness for Him no matter what He does or doesn't do in any situation!

Which leads us back to Daniel: Here was a guy who spent his whole life being a good witness for God. He worked as a top official for the Babylonian government all of his life there. When the Babylonians got conquered, amazingly enough Daniel got to be a top official for the next government as well. Most of us who've worked in situations with lots of people understand jealousy and trying to seize power in situations like that. I'm sure when all of this occurred, he probably figured, if this is the way it is going to end, why should I get any more special privilege than all the other prophets who were killed when it was their turn to be a witness for God? My guess is Daniel figured, "I've already lived my life as proof that God still rules and even got the Babylonian king to make public declarations to acknowledge God is God, so I might as well end my life as a witness for Him". After Daniel is rescued, all that is said for this chapter is the current king gave praises to God. It shows Daniel was not interested in getting glory for himself, but wanted God to get all the glory! In effect this is the last we know of His life, as the rest of the book is in effect appendixes of visions Daniel had prior to this story in this chapter!

Now that you know all of that, let me give some more details about this chapter. Hopefully we'll find a way or two to remind ourselves how to be a good witness for God when we're in our own "impossible" (no solution in sight) situations in life. Let's begin with the fact this book is in effect six stories (the six chapters so far) from Daniel's sixty plus years living in Babylon. The book has 6 more chapters that are going to describe visions he had in-between the six stories we get through this chapter. The last chapter

ended with a Babylonian king (the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar) being killed when the Persian Empire conquered took over the Babylonian one. The Persian leader in this chapter is called Darius. It's a title, not a name. Some argue he's the same guy as the Cyrus the first king of the Persian Empire and some experts argue Darius refers to the general who led the campaign in Chapter 5. The main thing to know is Darius is in charge in Chapter 6. This new emperor appoints new leaders including "old man" Daniel who again was in his 80's as one of the leaders over this new large Empire!

The chapter tells us under the king there were 3 "presidents" who oversaw 120 "satraps" who probably were in charge of collecting taxes over the large Persian (think Iranian) Empire! This empire was split under three presidents as to "not put all of their eggs in one basket". Anyway, Daniel's one of the three presidents and the text said he did his job honorably. Other leaders were jealous of him. That led to a plot to trap Daniel so he'd no longer be in charge! The trap was designed to appeal to the king's ego. It was a law that no one can honor anyone but the king for the next 30 days. I suspect they told the king, "You're new here! Let's make sure everyone's loyal to you, so sign a 30-day irrevocable law where no one can pray to anyone but you for that time frame!" The law appealed to the king's ego and was made. I suspect right after it was signed the other presidents had spies ready to watch Daniel.

When Daniel heard the news he went back to his normal habit of praying to God. I suspect he got into that habit probably based on Psalm 55, where David stated he prayed to God morning, noon, and night! The text says Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem which was in ruins then. The Persian emperor did make a decree that Israelites could return to their land when he got into power. I suspect he did that based on Daniel's influence. That decree was issued relatively shortly, before this one about praying to the king. Anyway, the text said Daniel heard about this law, and just went back to his normal habit of praying to God three times a day. I'm sure the other leaders had spies who saw Daniel do his daily prayer habit as soon as the law was past and then went to the king to "spring the trap"!

When the king heard about Daniel, he knew he was tricked but because the law was irrevocable, so it's "a done deal". The lion's den was probably a pit where the victims were lowered into! The decree was in effect set in stone so despite the king's effort to get Daniel free, he was stuck. I suspect Daniel got a better night's sleep than the king did! The text emphasized the fact the king didn't sleep well as he went to the lion's pit early the next morning to check on Daniel. The text doesn't say what happened when he was thrown in, other than Daniel survived! The text emphasized that God got the glory for what did occur! When Daniel got out, he greeted the king with, "Oh king, live forever". The chapter ends with the king praising God as God. What's emphasized is Daniel as a good witness for God and because of that God was praised in the world of the "Gentiles" that covered a huge territory!

By the way, some argue that there were only one or two lions and they were not hungry! Still the lions could have clawed Daniel to death. To prove that story false, the text mentions the fact the accusers of Daniel along with their families (standard punishment back then for false accusation) were then thrown in the lion's den and they all died before they even hit the ground of that pit! Was that fair for the wives and children? As I love to preach, if this is all that there is, it's very unfair to most people! What we're to get out of this story is the fact God calls us to be a witness for Him, with the results being His issue, not ours! With that said, I hope I gave you some new insights on a very familiar story!

If interested, the other two links on this chapter are a more detailed lesson that I did write about twenty years ago. You're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John