

One of Scripture's outstanding examples of courageous obedience is now presented. Daniel learned of the king's foolish act and recognized its direct bearing on his custom of praying three times daily. But still he prayed. The conspirators gathered to observe and then went quickly to the king to bring their accusation. The king, realizing his own foolishness, tried to release himself from having to effect the decree, but he was so pressed by the conspirators that he could not.

*10 Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.*

- *When Daniel knew:* The decree was likely proclaimed publicly, by proper channels. Daniel learned of it and was immediately faced with a major decision.
- *he entered his house:* From this it appears that Daniel was away from his residence at the time the decree came to his notice. He may have been at his office. From wherever he was, he went to his house to pray when the usual time came. The choice to do so could not have been easy. Hearing of the decree, he must have guessed who had persuaded the king to issue it, for he no doubt knew of the jealousy and opposition of these colleagues. He had probably been quite aware of their earlier investigation of his life and work. Would he now continue to pray, and so seem to fall into their trap? Or would he be wiser to cease for the thirty days, and so "outwit" them? Would it not be better to make sure of keeping his life for prayer and testimony later on than to continue praying now and risk losing it? Such thoughts must have moved through his mind; but his decision was, properly, to proceed as he was accustomed.
- *now in his roof chamber he had windows open:* The word for "his upper chamber" (תִּלְיָט, 'illit) seems to indicate a special room on the second floor, used for guests or as a private place of meditation and prayer (cf. 2 Sam. 18:33; 1 Kings 17: 19; 2 Kings 4 : 10 ; Acts 1 : 13 ; 10:9). The Babylonian climate is warm, and windows can be left open for airiness much of the year. It was to this exposed room-no doubt, the customary place-that Daniel went for his time of prayer. Certainly the thought passed his mind of not praying in this open room. Why not pray, if pray he must, somewhere in secret? Certainly there were other rooms in the house that he might have used. The reason for the clear statement as to where he prayed is to say that he did not change, but prayed where he was accustomed to pray. The reason is not difficult to see. If he should pray elsewhere, those knowing him and his habits, including especially his hostile colleagues, would think that he had ceased and this would spoil his testimony before them. He had been an open witness before, both in word and life practice; he must continue now lest all that he had done before to influence others to faith in the true God should be for naught. The existence of a continued testimony was more important than the existence of his life!
- *toward Jerusalem:* Likely the upper room had windows opening in more directions than one, which makes the force of this notice to be that Daniel prayed looking through those which opened toward the west, the direction of Jerusalem. Solomon had suggested the propriety of facing the Temple in prayer, at the time of his dedication of the Temple (cf. 1 Kings 8:33, 35, 38, 44, 48), and David seems to have practiced the idea in principle even before that time (cf. Ps. 5: 7; 28: 2). When the people had been taken captive, the gesture, symbolizing the direction of their hearts' desire, was even more significant. It is believed that the practice of Moslems today in facing Mecca when they pray is taken from this earlier custom. Three times a day: The word order in the Aramaic places this element before those of bowing, praying, and praising; thus giving it a place of emphasis. It is to be fully realized, then, that Daniel prayed not only once but his usual three times that day, thus not changing his normal pattern in even this respect. The three times were probably at morning, noon, and evening (cf. Ps. 55:17). To have maintained such a demanding schedule as this, even apart from continuing it now in the face of penalty, required great discipline of life. In his position as president, Daniel carried heavy responsibility, with much work to do. Under such demands, the temptation to neglect this sort of prayer pro-gram was no doubt strong, especially since he had to return home each noon for the purpose, while keeping on also with the morning and evening occasions. But Daniel had maintained it, apparently recognizing the priority of this faithful contact with God. He continued the same in the face of the unfair decree.
- *and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks:* These three verbs are participles, indicating regular or continuous action. Daniel not only prayed three times this one day, but he continued to do so on succeeding days. Even his visit in the den of lions would not have interrupted the practice,

because he was there for only one night; and he probably prayed then even more than ordinary. The first participle (בָּרַךְ *bareik*, “to bless, kneel”), followed by “knees,” indicates that he kneeled each time he prayed. That he prayed in this position shows that he wished to match the contrite attitude of heart, necessary for true prayer, with an appropriate posture ( cf. 1 Kings 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40). He also thus provided observers with an unmistakable indication of what he was doing . Apparently, he prayed near the open windows so that he might be seen in this position. The second participle (שָׁלַח *zelā’*, “to pray”) indicates the voicing of requests to God, and the third ( root, יָדָה *yedā’* “to praise”), the expression of praise. Daniel’s requests that first day would likely have been that he might be protected in the face of the new danger, and that God would somehow change the hearts of those who were bitter against him. That he was able to praise in the face of such treachery and danger is especially noteworthy . This is a splendid example of fulfilling the admonition in 1Thess 5:18, “*in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Messiah Yeshua.*”

**11–12.** *Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king’s injunction, “Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions’ den?” The king replied, “The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked.”*

- *came by agreement:* This is the same word for “agreement” as in verse six. The conspirators, knowing Daniel’s normal time to pray, came purposely to observe. They came as a group, united in their purpose of conspiracy. Since Daniel’s prayer-room was on the second floor, they may have arranged to view him from another second floor nearby.
- *making petition and supplication:* The word for “making petition” is used in verses seven and twelve; but that for “supplication” ( root, חָנַן *chānan*, “to show favor”) is used here for the first time. In the reflexive form (*hitpael*) employed it means to seek grace or favor for oneself. Daniel was asking God to be gracious toward him in this hour of trial.
- *So they approached:* There is no indication whether these men in any way made their presence or intention known to Daniel. If they observed him from outside his own residence, which seems likely, he may not have known that they were there, though he could easily have suspected it. The indication is only that they went quickly to the king with their information. Events at the moment were working just as they had planned.
- *The king replied:* The conspirators first asked the king whether he had not signed the binding decree, using the same words as in verse seven. He responded, in proper manner that he had; probably wondering why they should ask.

**13** *Then they answered and spoke before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day.”*

- The conspirators thought that they had everything just as they wanted it. The trap was ready to be sprung. They may have kept their composure, but probably some overeagerness displayed itself as they voiced their charge to the king. Their manner in doing so may have contributed to the king’s strong reaction against them, as the following verses portray.
- *Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah:* Certainly the king knew that Daniel was one of the Judean captives. He would not have appointed a man president without knowing his background. That these men mentioned the fact of Daniel’s captivity, then, suggests that they held it against him. They wanted to picture him to Darius—just as they doubtless thought of him in their bitter jealousy— as a foreign misfit, who was now showing his true nature by disloyalty to the king. Their thinking was much like that of the accusers of the three friends when they refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s image, purposely referring to them as “Jews” (cf. 3:8, 12 ). Like those accusers, too, they were actually charging the king with improper judgment in selecting Daniel to office in the first place.
- *pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed:* With these words also, the conspirators sought to color their report. The only charge they could make truthfully was the last they mentioned—that Daniel prayed three times daily. But this reference to showing disrespect for the king and his decree was an untrue interpretation of Daniel’s action. Daniel was in no way showing disrespect by his praying.

- *Three times a day*: It is doubtful that these men waited with bringing this accusation until they had seen Daniel pray all three times on one day. The likelihood is that they waited until they had seen him pray only one time and then concluded, on the basis of his usual custom, that he would pray all three times. They would not have wanted to wait any longer than necessary before hurrying to the king; and besides, they likely reasoned that for Daniel to have prayed once was really as damaging for him in respect to breaking the decree, as praying three times. They were actually complimenting him, then, by saying that he was praying three times a day.

14 *Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him.*

- *he was deeply distressed*: The word for “distressed” (בְּאִישׁ, *be'eish*) is used impersonally, and, with the adjective and following phrase, means literally “there was sore displeasure upon him.” This was not the kind of reaction by the king for which the accusers had hoped. They had wanted him to be angered that anyone would dare disregard a decree signed by him. But Darius had known Daniel too long and well to believe any such charge against him, even if brought by his officers. It had not been for nought that the king had been thinking about elevating him in position. His displeasure was probably due principally to two facts: first, that Daniel, whom he respected so highly, was the one being charged with disloyalty; and, second, that he had himself been so shortsighted as to sign a decree that would entrap one with the dedication of Daniel. He may not yet have recognized that these men had perpetrated a plot, and so was not yet sore displeased with them. He would recognize it, however, before the day was over, as the next verse shows.

- *Set his mind on delivering Daniel*: The verse does not merely say that the king set his mind to deliver Daniel, but that he set his mind on Daniel (as a person), and that this involved delivering him. The Aramaic word order places Daniel first in the sentence, the stressed position, giving this thought, literally: “and as for Daniel, he set his mind to deliver him.” This fact corroborates what the overall story shows: that Darius did indeed think highly of this man. If the accusers had realized how highly, they might not have dared to try their plan.

- *and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him*. All that the king did in his endeavor to deliver Daniel is difficult to say. He probably worked with lawyers to see if there were any possibility for setting the decree aside. Perhaps he argued that the king, who had made the law, ought to be able to set it aside; or he may have asked if there were no past cases where similar decrees had been rescinded; or he may have inquired if a man might be pardoned by the king and still satisfy legal requirements. How much of the day still remained when he began this endeavor is not revealed. If the time of Daniel’s praying that was observed by the accusers was the noon occasion—a possibility that fits well into all that is known—he probably had most of an afternoon. He continued his efforts until sundown (literally, “going in of the sun,” מְעַלֵּי שְׁמֶשׁ, *me'alei shimsha*), signifying that he expended considerable time and energy in this endeavor. This is a remarkable example of an absolute monarch being bound by a law still more absolute. Every sense of justice within the king cried out that Daniel should be delivered, but law demanded that he be punished.

15 *Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed.”*

- *came by agreement*: For the third time this word (הִרְגִּישׁוּ, *hargishu*) is used ( cf. vv. 6, 11). Its repetition stresses the unitedness of purpose that these men maintained throughout the enactment of their plan. The time of this coming before the king was apparently just after sundown, when the king had finished with his efforts. Perhaps the king himself summoned the men on this occasion. With the day’s inquiries not having produced results, he may have thought to examine them further as to their evidence regarding Daniel. Were they sure of what they had seen? Did they know that Daniel had disobeyed the decree

- *No binding decree...may be changed*: If the king hoped that he would receive any help from the men, however, he was due for more disappointment. Their first words were to remind him of the unchangeableness of his decree; something which very likely had been a prime source of irritation to him all afternoon. He surely was in no mood to be reminded of it again. That they did may well have triggered his recognition of the plot which they were carrying out. Pieces of the overall picture may then have fallen into place. These men had been the ones to persuade him to sign the decree ; they had been conveniently on hand to observe Daniel in his praying;

and now they were insisting that the decree be carried out. These men, then, had plotted death, and had used him, the king, as an instrument to bring it about!

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With all possibilities for delivering Daniel exhausted, Darius finally gave the order that he be cast to the lions, expressing to Daniel his personal hope that God would deliver him. The time apparently was still the same evening, because the king afterward went to his palace, where he spent a sleepless night in his concern for Daniel. Daniel, however, was not harmed by the beasts; and the king, on finding this to be true the following morning, ordered him to be immediately released from the den.

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**16** *Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you."*

- The word "Then (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, *bei' dayin*), usually translated as "then," is best taken in the sense of "at last," that is, after all attempts by Darius at deliverance had failed. Keil states, "The execution of the sentence was carried out, according to Oriental custom, on the evening of the day in which the accusation was made.<sup>1</sup> This would explain why the king had labored so diligently all that afternoon. Any way of effecting Daniel's deliverance had to be found before evening.
- *and Daniel was brought in:* Many details are omitted. With the order given by the king, personnel were dispatched to apprehend Daniel. Daniel would thus have learned only then of the results of his continuing to pray in spite of the decree. He had been faithful in praying, leaving the matter in God's hands. Now it seemed that God was not to spare him. Many years before, it had seemed the same to Daniel's three friends as they had faced the fiery furnace. Knowing the kind of person Daniel was, however, one can believe that he faced the challenge no less courageously than they. He was marched to the den, which was perhaps at some distance from his home. The king probably was already there. A knowing look may have passed between the two as Daniel arrived, Daniel silently inquiring regarding the thinking of the king, and the king trying to reassure him that he was opposed to what was happening. But law had to have its way, and Daniel was marched to the opening of the den ( cf. v. 7 for description).
- *Your God:* These words from Darius may have been spoken before Daniel was actually cast into the den, even though given in the text in the word order indicated by the translation. Typical Aramaic or Hebrew style of writing would allow for this. The context suggests that the words were voiced as Daniel was brought to the mouth of the den. The verb for "deliver" (יִשְׁיִבְךָ < שִׁיב) is in the imperfect state and may be translated as a "wish" (jussive), as here, or a prediction, as in KJV.<sup>2</sup> It is not likely, however, that Darius, a pagan, could have had a confidence in God to express a flat prediction. It is remarkable that he could voice even such a wish. That he did so shows that Daniel had been busy in witnessing to him, as he had been years earlier to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. The significance of his words "whom you constantly serve" should not be missed. Darius clearly had been impressed by Daniel's faithfulness in life behavior to his God; no doubt a telling factor in molding the king's own thinking. One's life conduct is so important if his oral testimony is to be effective .

**17** *A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.*

- *A stone was brought:* As noted under verse seven, the den likely had both a side and a top opening. The opening covered by this stone was probably at the side. The verse reveals that the stone was placed for reasons of security; and a side entrance, on a level with the inside floor, would have called for this more than one above. This entrance was likely covered normally by some type of grating, with the prepared stone at hand when special security was needed. Ventilation may have been solely through the top opening when the stone was in place. Daniel was probably put into the den through this same side entrance, but the next morning taken out through the top, as will be observed. Later the accusers were apparently cast in from the top.

<sup>1</sup> KDC on Daniel, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> See Walvoord, *WD*, p. 140 for evidence for the reading: "He must deliver you," denoting obligation of God to do this.

- *The king sealed it:* Sealing of this kind was done, not so much to give physical security as to make any breaking or moving of what ever was sealed illegal. This sealing may have been done by means of tied cords, the knot being covered with wax into which a seal was pressed to leave its carved configuration. Or a clay mixture may have been applied at the juncture of the stone and the wall of the den and on this a seal impressed. Either way, the removal of the stone would have broken the impression in the clay, the broken seal giving indication that the stone had been moved, making the one who did it liable to punishment. Since every seal was private to its owner, no one else could break a seal and then place the same imprint on freshly applied clay to avoid detection.

- *...his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles:* The word employed denotes a signet ring, used for impressing its design on wax or clay to make such a seal. Other known forms of seals were stamp seals and cylinder seals. Whatever type was used, each had carved on the imprinting surface a design whose impression remained on the clay when so applied. Kings often used the special signet ring (cf. 1Kings 21:8 ; Esth. 3:12; 8:8, 10). In this instance, not only was the king's own seal used, but also that of his lords. Apparently, the king's lords (including perhaps both commissioners and satraps), as a body, had an official seal too, used as a mark of authority for documents issued in their name. The employment of both rings in this instance indicated that the approval of both the king and the lords would be needed to remove the stone.

- *Might not be changed:* These words give the reason for the security measure. Daniel's situation in the den was not to be changed by anyone. The accusers, who likely were present and wanted the lords' signet seal used, would have desired in this way to insure against the possibility of the king himself sending men to rescue Daniel;<sup>3</sup> and the king would have wanted to insure against these accusers' trying to take Daniel's life some other way, if the lions did not.

**18** *Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.*

- *Spent the night fasting:* This phrase and the next make clear that Darius normally spent his evenings with eating and entertainment. But this evening was different. He did not eat. Probably he had eaten not ing since noon, either, because the main oriental meal then, as now, seems to have been scheduled late in the evening. His body may have suffered from lack of nourishment, but apparently he did not notice. His mind was occupied with Daniel. He did not wish to lose a valuable officer; and he felt guilty in the part he had unknowingly played in putting Daniel where he was. He probably also was ashamed at having been tricked so easily through flattery.

- *no entertainment:* The reference here is to something that might act as a diversion from the stress which the current event was bringing upon the king. The word used (דַּחָוָן, *dachavan*) is not specific as to what kind, and probably this varied from evening to evening. Types which have been suggested by expositors include instruments of music, dancing girls, and concubines. The king was not interested in any kind of entertainment that night. His sleep fled from him: when the king tried to sleep, he could not. The word for "fled" (נָדַד, *nādad*) is used in its equivalent Hebrew form to refer to physical flight, from one place to another (cf. Isa. 21:15; 33 : 3; jer. 4:25). Used of sleep, it lays stress on the extreme degree to which it leaves the person: as if it had run away. Apparently, the king rolled and tossed on his bed, his mind going over the plight of Daniel, the fruitlessness of his efforts to deliver him, the craft of the accusers, his own stupidity in being tricked, and the measures he might take in retaliation against the schemers.

**19–20** *Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den. When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"*

- *...arose at dawn, at the break of day –* The word for "at the break of day" (בִּנְגֻזָּה, *benagta'*) means literally "in brightness." The time, then, was just at dawn as the first bright light was shining forth in the east. Since the king could not sleep, he arose early and made his way to the den. He went "in haste," showing eagerness to get there, moving along as quickly as his advanced age (cf. 5: 31) permitted, desirous of learning whether Daniel yet lived.

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<sup>3</sup> The king likely had authority to break such a lord's seal, but the lords could have reasoned that he would not violate their authority easily.

This suggests that he really believed this might be true, showing that he had been serious in his wish to Daniel the night before. This hope could only have been based on Daniel's own faith in his God and on reports the king had no doubt heard concerning miracles wrought for Daniel and his friends during Babylonian days.

- *...cried out with a troubled voice:* Even before fully reaching the den, Darius began to call out to Daniel, his voice reflecting the grief he felt. The language suggests that he did not take time for the stone to be removed from the side entrance, which means that his voice was heard by Daniel through the top opening. Reaching the opening and peering down into the den from the light above, he could not have seen whether Daniel lived or not, for the den would have been black in darkness.

- *Servant of the living God:* In expressing his wish of the evening before, Darius had employed the phrase "whom you serve continually," used here again, but he did not then refer to Daniel as a "servant" of God. This time he used both expressions, showing that he thought of Daniel as a faithful servant of God. His use of the word "living" (יָיִ) is particularly noteworthy. Daniel had no doubt used the qualifier in his times of speaking to Darius regarding God and he would have implied by it that God lives, in distinction from other deities who do not. Darius could hardly have intended so much here, for he, a Persian, certainly believed his gods lived also, but he probably used it simply as a matter of course, copying Daniel's language, in his hope that this God of life might have been able to save Daniel's life.

- *Has your God been able:* It is sometimes stated that Darius asked this question merely as a heathen person, believing only generally that gods do benefit those who please them. Certain matters, however, show that his respect for Daniel's God went beyond this. In the first place, as noted, Darius' actions, initially in expressing his wish of the prior evening, then both coming early to the den and calling down to Daniel to see if he was alive, show that he really believed God might deliver this man. The heathen did not have this kind of faith in their gods, for they never witnessed such miracles on their part. Secondly, when Daniel's response from below indicated that he was alive, Darius is not said to have been amazed, as though not really believing this might happen, but only "very glad" at the good news. Thirdly, he then issued the remarkable decree recorded (vv. 25-27), much like the earlier decree of Nebuchadnezzar, calling on people of his domain to give respect to this God.

**21–22** *Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."*

- *Then Daniel spoke:* The word for "spoke" (מָלַל, *mālāl*) has not been used in the book before, but always the less expressive "say" (אָמַר, *āmar*). The significance seems to be to emphasize that Daniel actually voiced words to the king; that is, that he was really able to do so. The reaction of the king, on hearing the words, after such an emotion filled night, must have been very marked.

- *O King, live forever:* This was the proper, formal term of greeting for kings of the day. It is used several times in the book (2:4; 3:9; 5:10; 6:6), but never with as much significance as here. Daniel could be proper in addressing the king, even when in a den of lions. He had recognized the words coming from above as those of his monarch, and he responded with appropriate decorum. He thus displayed his willingness to be subject to this man, even though Darius had been instrumental in his being in the den. Likely the king's manner the evening before, however, had convinced Daniel that he had not been sympathetic to what was done.

- *My God has sent His angel:* Hearing Daniel's voice was enough to tell the king that he was alive, but Daniel wished to tell him how it had happened. God had sent His angel to effect the deliverance. Daniel's God had done what Darius had hoped, then, through the instrumentality of a supernatural agent. How Darius conceived of such an agent is not clear, but the Scriptures teach that angels are spirit beings, created by God for the purpose of serving Him. One Area of service is the protection of people (Ps. 34: 7; 91: 11; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1: 14). It is even possible that this one was the Angel of Yahweh; as was likely true also regarding the fiery furnace occasion years before (cf. 3: 25). Since Daniel knew of this heavenly emissary, it is probable that he was visible to Daniel, something also true for the three friends in the furnace. Perhaps, if Darius could have seen down into the darkness of the dungeon, he would have witnessed him as well, just as Nebuchadnezzar had in the furnace. God had sent His personal representative to accompany and protect the three friends in their hour of trial; and now had done the same for Daniel in the den of lions. Both occasions thus were turned into blessed memories rather than times of horror.

- *Have not harmed me:* The angel had made the great lions powerless to hurt Daniel. The words, “shut the mouth of the lions” should be taken as figurative for general disablement. If only their mouths had been sealed, they could still have mauled Daniel with their feet. But Daniel had not been harmed in any way. He may even have enjoyed a better night’s rest than the king.
- *I was found innocent:* Literally, “innocence was found to me.” The word for “innocence” (זָכוּ, *zāku*) comes from a verb which, in its corresponding Hebrew form (זָכָה/זָכַח, *zākah/zākak*) means “to be clean, pure,” always in a moral sense. Daniel says that he was found pure from moral defilement before God. He was not claiming sinlessness (cf. 9: 3), but was saying that he was not guilty of the charge of disloyalty to the king. That he adds before Him means that God, who knows the heart, recognized this innocence and accordingly had sent the angel.
- *Before you I have done no wrong:* This has already been implied in the prior statement, but Daniel wished to make this very clear to the king, lest he miss the implication. Daniel had done no wrong (literally, “hurtful act, crime”) to the king. How much Daniel had been told as to the charges made against him by the conspirators is not indicated, but he could have guessed their nature; and he wanted the king to know that he was not guilty of any action detrimental to the king.