

Daniel 6:2-27
Dare to be Daniel?
WRCoB 12/01/24

How would you react if your faith in God was tested?

Could you stand firm
Even in the face of persecution or death?

John Naas, an early Brethren, faced such a trial.

Naas was a big, strong man
A head taller than most.

A Prussian officer arrested Naas
And tried to force him to become
A bodyguard to the king.

But Naas, in resolution, refused.

“My captain is the great Prince Immanuel
Our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The king was so impressed by his loyalty to Christ
He released him.

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In Biblical history
We find countless stories of people
Who were challenged by their loyalty to God.

We will look at one today.

The world admires success and status

And it is tempting to choose worldly gain
Than to follow Jesus.

But true fulfillment and lasting joy
And a legacy for others to emulate
Come from an unwavering devotion to God.

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Today's story takes place in Babylon
Around the year 535 B.C.

Daniel, along with many of the citizens of Jerusalem
Were taken captive and sent there
By King Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC.

This period is known as the exile
When the nation was occupied by foreign forces
And the residents forced from their homes.

The interesting thing about the exile
Is that though they were forced from their homes
They were not treated as prisoners or slaves.

They were allowed to build homes
Marry, have children, find occupations
And for the most part, practice their faith.

The Jews were integrated into the culture
And their skills utilized by their host country.

Daniel was a government employee.

He served as an advisor to the king for 60 years
Working within two separate governments
Babylonia and Persia.

He survived the reigns of four kings;

1. Nebuchadnezzar
2. Belshazzar
3. Darius
4. Cyrus.

It was in the reign of Darius that our story takes place.

By now, Daniel, is in his eighties.

He is a faithful employee to the king.

Due to his honesty, and hard work
King Darius wanted to make him 2nd in command.

This would make Daniel more powerful
Than any of the other government employees.

Well, the others were ecstatic about that. NOT!

Here some foreigner was holding an office
Any of them, by rights, should be holding.

They plotted against him.

Daniel's greatest vulnerability
Was his undying faith to God

They saw that and decided to use it against him.

And so, they tricked King Darius into signing a decree
Declaring a 30-day period when no one could pray
To any god or human, other than King Darius
Or else be thrown to the lions.

But Daniel continued his spiritual routine

He continued to kneel down 3X a day
In front of the window facing Jerusalem
And pray to his God
The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Those who plotted against him
Told King Darius of Daniel's actions.

And even though the king loved Daniel
He could not revoke his own decree.

The king had to throw Daniel into the den of lions.

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At dawn, the following day
The king ran to the lions' den
Hoping Daniel survived the night

Daniel told the king that God sent an angel
To shut the mouth of the lions.

In response to those who tried to trick the king

King Darius arrested them
And their wives and children

And threw them in the lions' den
Where they were immediately killed by the beasts.

Daniel prospered under the reign of Darius and Cyrus
While still placing first his allegiance to God.

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Daniel, in the face of death, took his stand.

Do we dare do as Daniel did?

Daniel prospered
But not all who remain loyal to God fare as well.

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William Tyndale, was an early Bible translator.

He lived during King Henry's reign
In the early 1500s.

He's the first to translate the Bible
From the original Greek and Hebrew languages
To English.

Tyndale was arrested and jailed for his faith in God.

In 1536 he was convicted of heresy
And executed by strangulation
His body burnt at the stake.

Not many of us will be confronted
With having to choose between God and this world.

But we may!

Jesus said that his followers
Will have to choose between him and the world.

You can't have both.

John 15:18-19 CEB

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, know that it hated me first.

Do we dare to be Daniel?

The Deacon Stephen dared in the book of Acts
When he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ
To the very ones who crucified Jesus.

They stoned him to death.

Martin Luther, the father of the great reformation
Dared when he protested against the state church

“Here I stand, I can do no more, God help me.”

John Kline, from Broadway VA, dared
When he was moderator for Brethren's AC
During the Civil War.

Others warned him against traveling to the North
Fearing he might be accused of being a spy.

But he went anyway.

On his return to Virginia he was shot and killed
By Confederates sympathizers.

I went to seminary with a man named Hailue.

He was a leader in the Mennonite Church in Ethiopia.

During the communist takeover in the 80s
The new government arrested Christian pastors.

They went door to door asking residences of their faith.

If they confessed to being Christian
The police asked them who their leaders were.

They went to Hailue's home.

He had been holding church services in his house
Which was illegal under the new regime.

They asked him if he was a pastor
He said yes.

They asked him if he was holding church in his home
He said yes.

They asked him if he will continue doing so
He said yes

They put him to jail for doing nothing more
Than practicing his faith in the privacy of his home.

He was imprisoned for eight years.

I asked him

Why couldn't he lie to the authorities
For the sake of his wife and children?

They were his responsibility too!

This was his reply.

*How could I renounce the very thing that has given me
life?*

*How could I deny my faith in God when God suffered
and died for me?*

*And how could I ever face my own family after denying
Christ?*

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I knew his answer even before I asked.

It's the same answer I get

When I ask Christians in Nigeria
About making a stand for Christ.

They dare to be Daniel.

The history of Christianity is a history of martyrdom

As we look down through the ages

We see both the victorious survivors of persecution
And martyrs' sufferings and deaths.

Some face lions

Others face raging mobs
Some face Government crack downs
While still others face radical extremists.

There is a common denominator in them all.

God's presence remained constant.

Matthew 5:10 CEV

**¹⁰ God blesses those people who are treated badly
for doing right. They belong to the kingdom
of heaven.**

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Even though Daniel experience ended well for him
Steadfast faith will not always end well on this earth.

Steadfast faith doesn't always lead to earthly success.

The suffering and death of Stephen

The persecution of Hailue and the church in Ethiopia
And the EYN church in Nigeria
Are stark reminders that Christian discipleship
Can often be threatening and difficult.

Yet, these testimonies of faithful followers
Can be a seed of hope for us today.

We are often faced with dividing allegiances.

- Faith versus Family
- Calling versus Career
- Personal Convictions versus Social Pressures
- Biblical Principles versus Political Ideology

Our religious convictions, if we are truly sincere
Will no doubt clash with the things of this world.

If they don't, well, you might want to evaluate
The faith you yourself express
With that of the biblical Jesus.

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Hope is the theme for the first Sunday of Advent.

Our first candle, the candle of hope
Reminds us that even in the darkest hour
God's light shines.

Seeds of hope are always planted in the soil of suffering

And so, may we carry this message of hope
Into our own Advent journey
Embracing the confidence
That even in the midst of suffering
God is with us

Christ is coming

May the hope of Christ in this season of Advent
Give us light as we walk in darkness.