

Bi235 Old Testament 2

Lesson Bi235-38 Daniel in the Lions' Den

Someone wrote a book called "A Long Obedience in the Same Direction." Daniel was an example of a 'long obedience.' He was captured and taken to Babylon as a young man. He rose to prominence in the government of Babylon a few years after his arrival. He served king after king for decades in Babylon, and even survived the fall of the Babylonian empire. He then saw the rise of the reign of Darius, a Medo-Persian king.

Throughout his long life, Daniel walked with God "in the same direction." He remained faithful to the God of Israel, the one true God. As a godly man in an ungodly country, he faced many trials. During these trials, he remained strong through his knowledge of the Bible and his daily practice of prayer.

He read the prophecies of Jeremiah during the first year of Darius's rule. He may have known Jeremiah before he was taken away from Judah. "Through them," he wrote, "I came to understand that the ruin of Jerusalem would last seventy years" (Dan 9:1-2). He responded to God's word by fasting, confessing, and praying. His prayer of confession and petition is the longest prayer in the Bible. He prayed, "Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name" (Dan 9:18-19).

His practice of prayer brought persecution. Darius had organized his government into 120 districts, each with its ruler. Over these 120 officials, he had appointed three administrators. One of the three was Daniel, a godly man. The king was impressed with Daniel's ability, but his fellow officials became jealous of Daniel. They looked for a way to discredit him. Daniel was blameless in his duties for the king. So his enemies said among themselves, "Maybe we can find something in his religious practices to discredit him" (Dan 6:5).

They went to Darius and said, "All of us administrators have agreed to recommend a new law for you to announce. We propose that you issue a decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next 30 days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. If you put this decree in writing, then it cannot be altered or repealed." They were appealing to the king's pride. He agreed with the proposal that he be worshiped as a god, and he put the law in writing.

Daniel learned about this new law, and went back to his house. The upstairs windows faced west toward Jerusalem, and this is where he prayed three times a day. He continued his practice of praying, as he had been doing for many years. His enemies sneaked around his house and heard him praying and asking God for help.

They hurried back to Darius and reported, "O king, didn't you published a decree that during the next 30 days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions' den?"

"Yes, I did," replied the king, "and a decree like this one cannot be altered or repealed."

Then they told the king about Daniel. “Daniel pays no attention to you or to your decree. We heard him praying his usual three times a day.” The king was upset about their report because Daniel was a favorite of his. He was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown that day to find a way around the decree.

Daniel’s enemies would not stop their accusation. They reminded Darius that even he could not repeal the decree that he had put in writing. Darius saw no way around the decree, so he ordered Daniel’s arrest. Soldiers arrested Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. Darius called out to him, “I can’t save you. May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”

They sealed the opening into the den with a large stone, so Daniel could not escape. Darius walked slowly back to his palace. He was so upset that he couldn’t eat or sleep. The next morning, he got up early and hurried to the lions’ den. When he came near the den, he called out to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve, been able to rescue you from the lions?”

Daniel was alive! He called out, “May the king live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the lions’ mouths. They haven’t hurt me, because God decided I was innocent. I have not done anything to hurt you, Your Majesty” (Dan 6:4-22).

The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. He checked him over, and found not even a scratch on Daniel’s body. Daniel had trusted God, and God had rescued him.

Then Darius gave the order, and the men who had conspired against Daniel were caught and thrown into the lions’ den. Before they landed on the floor of the den, the lions mauled them and broke their bones. They all perished.

Then Darius issued another decree, to be read throughout the kingdom: “In every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; . . . he rescues and saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions” (Dan 6:26-27).

Daniel continued to prosper during the reigns of Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian—giving many more years of godly service. God continued to reveal the future of empires and of the people of Israel. God revealed to Daniel that the succession of empires would finally be replaced by God’s kingdom. All nations and peoples would one day worship him and him alone. His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed (Dan 7:14).

In the New Testament, Paul was an educated Jewish Christian. He wrote, “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had” (Rom 15:4-5).

This story is **important** because it tells us that God continued to bless Daniel and gave him favor with kings. He was an influential leader in two successive empires.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that Daniel’s sources of spiritual insight and endurance were obedience to God, knowledge of the Scriptures, and a consistent practice of prayer. These

same three things are the source of spiritual insight and strength in the lives of Christian leaders today: consistent prayer, God's Word, and living a life of obedience to his will.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. How did Daniel remain strong in his faith during his long life? [Pause]
A. If you said, "He read the Scriptures about all that God had done in the past, and he developed the habit of daily prayers," you are correct.
2. Why did Daniel's enemies falsely accuse him? [Pause]
A. If you answered, "They were jealous of his high position in the government and his friendship with Darius," you answered correctly.
3. What did Darius do after God rescued Daniel from the lions' den? [Pause]
A. If you said, "He praised God and made a decree that people throughout his kingdom must fear and reverence the God of Daniel," you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened. See the events in your own mind. Then tell someone else the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and re-tell it until you feel sure you are repeating the words and actions correctly. Then compare your lifestyle to Daniel's. Are you known as a person of prayer and one who meditates on God's Word? Ask God to help you to be more diligent in these practices on a daily basis. Encourage those you influence to do the same.