



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-27-2015 @ 0900

"How Much *Weight* Does Your Devotion Bring?"

Daniel 5:25-31

'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus!

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His Word,
Just to rest upon His Promise, just to know, "Thus saith the Lord!"
Jesus! Jesus! How I trust Him! How I've proved Him o'er and o'er!
Jesus! Jesus! Precious Jesus! O, for Grace to trust Him more!

Daniel 5:25-31

"This is what was written: 'Number, number, weight, divisions.' And this is what it means: *number*, God has numbered the days of your kingdom, and brought it to an end; *weight*, you have been weighed on the scales, and found to be too light; *divisions*, your kingdom is divided up, and given to the Medes and Persians." Immediately Belshazzar ordered his servants to dress Daniel in a robe of royal purple, and to hang a gold chain of honor around his neck. And he made him the third in power in the kingdom. That same night Belshazzar, the king of Babylonia, was killed; and Darius the Mede, who was then sixty-two years old, seized the royal power."

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever considered all the times you "thought about", "seriously resolved", or even said to others, "I am *gonna* get it right! I *will* become a much more devoted child of God"?
- How many years now have you been "on the fence" about true devotion to God? What will it take to "go all the way in" for God? What *more* will God need to do to win your total devotion?
- Does this "devotional shortfall" ever leave you feeling a little guilty, or awaken any sense of new urgency to "get right with God"? Are you just "over it", or do you still hunger for real faith?

Real FAITH rocks! Genuine BELIEF rules! If Daniel teaches us anything, he and his friends show us on no uncertain terms how God puts us on His scales constantly, testing our trust, training our vision of "right" and "worth"! (If those "scales" measured us at this moment, would they find us "heavy" with an enduring devotion, or "light" with a frivolous attachment to undisciplined desires? In a culture that caters to selfish wants, unstable whims, and crass cravings, it's easy to neglect spiritual search and devotional diligence. How often do most of us "spend quality time with God"? Do we even care about how God thinks of us? It's easy to "marginalize" God as some benevolent old wimp who lets us get away with petty "indiscretions", allows us to "get by" with a few crumbs of "devotional play-acting" that lacks any "true faith". We want a God who is always "there for us", but who "cuts us slack" when we "turn our backs" on Him. Notice how this passage from Daniel proclaims that God will not justify or "understand" this attitude one little bit. God is more than a "Watcher"; He is the "Reader of Hearts", and the "Weigher of Souls"! He reads our hearts, too, fully aware of exactly how 'devoted' we are. He "numbers" our days, though we tend to live as if we have all the time in the world to "get things right." He "divides" the devout from the devious, and rewards each according to its character. God, grant us the Grace of Devotional Vision! Awaken us to Your Wisdom, so we place You at the top of our "priority list"...and keep You there! Arouse in us a love of Your Truth, so we go from "playing church" to "living Gospel", responding to You as "Awesome Origin" of "devout life", "Wondrous Way" of "daily piety", and "Glorious Goal" of "sacrificial spirituality". Teach us to swap earthly "bucket list" for Heavenly "Blessedness" so we go "all in" for You, the God who have given "Your All" for us!



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-28-2015 @ 0900

"Your Faith Can Make You a Target!"

Daniel 6:1-5

'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus!

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His Word,
Just to rest upon His Promise, just to know, "Thus saith the Lord!"
Jesus! Jesus! How I trust Him! How I've proved Him o'er and o'er!
Jesus! Jesus! Precious Jesus! O, for Grace to trust Him more!

Daniel 6:1-5

"Darius decided to appoint a hundred and twenty governors to hold office throughout his empire. In addition, he chose Daniel and two others to supervise the governors, and to look after the king's interests. Daniel soon showed that he could do better work than the other supervisors or the governors. Because he was so outstanding, the king considered putting him in charge of the whole empire. Then the other supervisors and the governors tried to find something wrong with the way Daniel administered the empire, but they couldn't, because Daniel was reliable, and did not do anything wrong or dishonest. They said to each other, 'We are not going to find anything of which to accuse Daniel, unless it is something in connection with his religion.'"

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you noticed how the "worldly" and "secular" so dislike seeing a "true believer" succeed or prosper, that they will attack, discredit, or otherwise oppose "the Faithful" at every opportunity?
- Have you ever known a "child of God" so devout in practice, and so charitable in daily speech, you could find absolutely no fault in them or in any way in which they conducted themselves?
- How deeply would you say you are "connected with your religion"? Have you had to face any hostility or adversity due to the faith you practice? How did you "handle" that "challenge"?

In today's passage, note how God continued to elevate Daniel because of his faithfulness. Daniel had placed all his trust in God, and God continued to repay Daniel with success and honor, even under a new king. Daniel himself took no credit for that "success" on the basis of brilliance, talent, or luck; he depended totally upon God's blessing, grace and favor. But his secular counterparts only saw the flashy surface of his privilege, and then as now, the citizens of the "fallen world" did NOT want to see a "true believer" succeed or "get ahead" in any way, shape, or form. Anyone who takes a stand for God must prepare for opposition and challenge. People who would normally *never* work together will "join forces" just to bring down a "child of God" they despise. In Daniel's day, his pagan opponents resented him because he had more "pull" than they did, and his "strange ways" may have frightened them. (It's a common human tendency to fear what we don't understand.) For his part, Daniel wasn't satisfied with "religious show"; he was a man of firm purpose and true conviction. Any "part-time devotion" would not "cut it" with him. He was a 24/7/365 disciple of the ONE WHO IS truly God of "all-that-is"! When his contemporaries contented themselves with "covenants of convenience", Daniel would "stop, drop, and pray" to worship God with his whole heart, soul, strength, and mind. God, grant us the Grace of Faithful Fervor! When the forces of a fearful world oppose us, hold us securely in Your Peace and Favor. Sustain us in a steadfast ministry that glorifies You and assists the truly needy in ways that "raise them from the dust". Help us all live in the holy Freedom You desire to share with all the humble who approach You with willing spirits and gracious hearts.



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-29-2015 @ 0900

“You Thought They Would ‘Play Fair’?”

Daniel 6:6-8

‘Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus!

‘Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His Word,
Just to rest upon His Promise, just to know, “Thus saith the Lord!”
Jesus! Jesus! How I trust Him! How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er!
Jesus! Jesus! Precious Jesus! O, for Grace to trust Him more!

Daniel 6:6-8

“So they went to see the king, and said, ‘King Darius, may Your Majesty live forever! All of us who administer your empire – the supervisors, the governors, the lieutenant governors, and the other officials – have agreed that Your Majesty should issue an order and enforce it strictly. Give orders that for thirty days no one be permitted to request anything from any god or from any human being except from Your Majesty. Anyone who violates this order is to be thrown into a pit filled with lions. So let Your Majesty issue this order and sign it, and it will be in force, a law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed.’”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever felt sorry for an “individual of integrity” who awakened a “world of hurt” simply by “doing the job right”? (Is it really “paranoia” if they actually *are* “out to get you”?)
- Do you know of occasions in which “one of the golden children” is sacrificed on the “altar of envy” because jealous and ambitious adversaries are out to get them?
- Have you ever borne the brunt of cruel plotting designed to entrap, humiliate, and discredit you to compromise your effectiveness, and destroy your good name for someone else’s gain?

You had “paid your dues”...“given your all” for the good of the team. Then a new coach arrived, with a whole new “playbook”. All you ever wanted was a “fair shake” and a reasonable chance to make a good showing; maybe you were counting on “past performance reviews”, or “good press” you had enjoyed before, which led you to think your teammates would actually play fair. What you got was a “slam” that was anything but fair; ever since then, you have been among the “walking wounded”. Does it still *hurt*? Are you still angry? Are you nursing a grudge against your “opposition”? Do you still find your mind “working overtime” to justify your feelings? Now consider Daniel. He faced a formidable assembly of high-powered officials aligning against him, because they were jealous of his position, a post he had earned because of his faith, integrity, and good character. Now if you are a person of faith, integrity, and good character what should your response be? If you truly BELIEVE in God, as “Ruler Over All”, would “unfair opposition” and “jealous alliances” really upset you? Note again how Daniel has done nothing to earn enmity except “stand for God”, and maintain worship of his God before a hostile host of envious adversaries. He did all of the “king’s work” as “done unto the Lord”, treating all those around him with honor and justice, and he was “rewarded” with a “set-up” for a big fall. God, grant us the Grace of Fidelity in Adversity! You are “Lord of the Faithful” at all times, both when Your Faithful are honored, and when they are challenged, and even disgraced. Like Daniel of old, keep us true to You, even when things take a turn we can’t understand! When our faith makes us “targets of opportunity”, teach us to go “all in” for You, as You have gone “all-out” for us. See to it that we are “ever prepared” to stand strong...even when the world doesn’t “play fair”.



DEVOTIONAL TIME

04-30-2015 @ 0900

“When Enemies Arise, Stop, Drop, and Pray!”

Daniel 6:9-13

‘Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus!

‘Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His Word,
Just to rest upon His Promise, just to know, “Thus saith the Lord!”
Jesus! Jesus! How I trust Him! How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er!
Jesus! Jesus! Precious Jesus! O, for Grace to trust Him more!

Daniel 6:9-13

“So King Darius signed the order [forbidding ‘foreign’ prayer]. When Daniel learned the order had been signed, he went home. In an upstairs room in his house, there were windows that faced Jerusalem. There, just as he had always done, he knelt down at the open windows and prayed to God three times a day. When Daniel’s enemies observed him praying to God, all of them went...to the king, to accuse Daniel. They said, ‘Your Majesty, you signed an order that for the next thirty days, anyone who requested anything from any god or from any human being except you would be thrown into a pit filled with lions!’ The king replied, ‘Yes, that is a strict order, a law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed.’ Then they said to the king, ‘Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, does not respect Your Majesty, or obey the order you issued. He prays regularly three times a day!’”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever felt “unfairly penalized” by “unreasonable demands” and “preferential policies” that infringed on your freedom and marginalized your values and ideals?
- Do you remember occasions in which you were “set up to fail” by others who were simply “itchin’ for a switchin’” due to their self-centered machinations and mean-spirited plots?
- Did you ever have to “pray your way through” a period of persecution and privation? How did you “find the favor” of the Lord to “stand fast” and continue your customary devotional life?

Life can take some “funny turns”! Consider Daniel; he’s gone from “pillar” to “post” in his faith life time and Time and TIME again! Born to nobility in Judah, he suffers exile when his Kingdom is crushed by the armies of Babylon. He makes a life for himself by insisting on dietary purity, personal integrity, and unflinching devotion to the God in whom he trusts with a will of iron. When threatened with death, he and his three friends turn to the Lord for wisdom and courage...and God delivers, over and over again. When Babylon’s “day” is done, Dan lands on his feet! Performing with the same admirable dedication, good sense, and mystic insight that served him well in his youth, he earns the trust of the “new sheriff in town”—King Darius. Life is “looking up” ... but wait; there are “serpents” in “paradise”. Unhappy with their current “situation” and limited “sphere of influence”, Daniel’s fellow courtiers plot to ruin this “interloper” from the west. They compose a law they know Daniel will never obey, and so they can now call his loyalty to Darius into question. All they have to say, is, “This ‘Stranger’ is no real friend of Darius; he is seeking his own way, and will take down your kingdom to set up one of his own!” Figuring that “nobody’s got a prayer” in a pit of hungry lions, these angry and desperate conspirators are sure Daniel will do their work for them...by disobeying a direct order of his king. It does not appear to have occurred to them that Daniel was dealing regularly with *the* real GOD, who is more than able to deliver his “beloved children”! Silly opportunists! Daniel’s God is both a Savior and a Warrior; He will deliver His Own, and visit wrath and doom upon the rebellious! God, grant us the Grace of Steadfast Trust and Habitual Devotion. Teach us to root our trust deeply in Your Grace, and seek Your Favor with humble hearts and persevering spirits! We acknowledge before the world that You have gone “all out” for us; empower us to go “all-in” for You!



DEVOTIONAL TIME

05-01-2015 @ 0900

“Life with God is Good...Even in the Pits!”

Daniel 6:16-22

‘Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus!

‘Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His Word,
Just to rest upon His Promise, just to know, “Thus saith the Lord!”
Jesus! Jesus! How I trust Him! How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er!
Jesus! Jesus! Precious Jesus! O, for Grace to trust Him more!

Daniel 6:16-22

“So the king gave orders for Daniel to be taken and thrown into the pit filled with lions! He said to Daniel, ‘May your God, whom you serve so loyally, rescue you!’ A stone was put over the mouth of the pit, and the king placed his own royal seal and the seal of his noblemen on the stone, so that no one could rescue Daniel. Then the king returned to the palace, and spent a sleepless night, without food or any form of entertainment. At dawn, the king got up and hurried to the pit. When he got there, he called out anxiously, ‘Daniel, servant of the living God! Was the God you serve so loyally able to save you from the lions?’ Daniel answered, ‘May Your Majesty live forever! God sent His angel to shut the mouths of the lions so that they would not hurt me. He did this because He knew that I was innocent, and because I have not wronged you, Your Majesty!’”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Do you have moments in life you remember as having been “thrown to the hungry lions”? How did it feel to sense a “seal of doom” locking you in to “no-win” situation?
- Have you had to endure a “cheerless”, “sleepless night” like the king, hoping against hope that “help was on the way”, but knowing there was little you could do but “keep vigil”?
- What was it like for you to have your faith vindicated? If you were “in the pit”, how did you experience “Divine Intervention”? If you had “kept vigil”, what was it like to hear “testimony”?

Life among the lions lacks no lessons”! As Daniel discovered, that den of lions was an awesome “classroom”. In the midst of those hungry beasts, a holy angel taught him of the Goodness of God in a fashion he could never appreciate otherwise. Of course, he had faith in the Lord before he was tossed into the den. He wouldn’t have faced the test in the first place if his faith in the “God of his fathers” hadn’t driven him to defy the royal order. But once among the “big cats”, in the depths of a *loooong* night, Daniel had to “dig deep” for the faith he needed to trust God for the coming of the dawn. We’re not told much about this “angel” who “shut the mouths of the lions”, but God’s holy messenger certainly came equipped with the strength and wisdom required to rescue the faithful prophet. When darkness fled at the dawning, and Darius broke the seal on the chamber, the angel’s work was done, and in most convincing fashion! God had “come through” again, to rescue one of the Faithful! Did fervent prayer play a big part here? No doubt! Was there some reflection on the times and ways God had delivered others? Probably! But the key to the whole event lay in Daniel’s basic conviction that God was “already there”, ready to “tame lions” on behalf of an innocent man! He went into that den without fear, because there was nowhere Darius could put him that God could not sustain him. Darius may have been pleasantly shocked at the outcome of this “trial by lions”, but Daniel was merely “doing the Lord’s bidding”! God, grant us the Grace of Childlike Certitude! When the “lion pits” open up before us, and our world seems a “hostile den”, open our inner eyes to sense Your encompassing Presence. Let Your holy angels surround us with the Grace and Peace we need to stand for You, testifying to Your Goodness, and witnessing Your Salvation to all who need to learn of Your Love, and taste of Your Truth. Even in “the pits”, *life with You* is GOOD!