

"By faith..."

22. Daniel

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SCRIPTURE presents the man Daniel as a marvellous character whom we would do well to emulate. He was not only a man "greatly beloved" in God's sight (Dan. 10:11), but he was also of good repute in the eyes of those who were not called of God. Even they described him as "well favoured" (1:4) and having "an excellent spirit" (5:12). The writer to the Hebrews draws our attention to that which underpinned his character, the power of his faith that "stopped the mouths of lions" (11:33). The book of Daniel confirms that they were stopped "because he believed in his God" (6:23).

The act of faith that resulted in Daniel's deliverance by God was his kneeling in prayer: "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (v. 10).

It is clear from his manner of praying—towards Jerusalem—that his mind was on his hope. The "substance" of the "things" that he "hoped for" (Heb. 11:1) was to do with God's holy city. He looked for the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (v. 10). He looked "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:18). He had his mind set on heavenly things, "not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2).

It seems that the timing of this severe test of Daniel's faith was the early part of the reign of the Darius mentioned in Daniel 5:31 and 6:1. Daniel 9 indicates that in the first year of the reign of possibly this same Darius, Daniel looked in particular for the accomplishment of the "seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (v. 2). In response to his fervent prayer for the forgiveness of sins, God revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel the time of the bringing in of everlasting righteousness.

With the eye of faith Daniel could then see more clearly the time when "the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven" would be "given to the people of the saints of the most High" (7:27). These things would assume an im-

portance very much greater than the immediate problems associated with the scheming of the presidents and princes of King Darius's realm. Daniel had seen God's angels at work, not only to bring him "into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs" (1:9), but to "[quench] the violence of fire" (Heb. 11:34) to preserve his friends alive in the face of Nebuchadnezzar's fury. The Lord was on his side, so he need not fear what man could do to him (13:6).

We can only have this attitude of mind if we also regard the things of the Kingdom that we have been assured of as having much greater importance than the immediate problems that face us, however harrowing they may be. Two of the striking parallels between Daniel's situation and ours are:

- 1 We too have been brought into "favour and tender love", but by our God, not men. Paul speaks of "this grace wherein we stand", which is given to us as a result of having peace with God because He has counted us as righteous through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1,2). "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us" (1 Jno. 3:1)!
- 2 We also are assured of the same degree of protection that enabled Daniel to emerge from the lion's den unscathed. The Apostle Paul was delivered out of the mouth of the lion when he stood before the Roman authorities (2 Tim. 4:17). Paul goes on to give us every reason to rejoice in the deliverance afforded us: "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (v. 18).

The faithful could not ask for more than to be delivered from every evil work. For Daniel, his ordeal ended in a way reminiscent of another time, 550 years later, when again very early in the morning a stone was rolled away from the mouth of a cave. When King Darius went to the cave where Daniel had been shut up with the lions, he heard Daniel's welcome words: "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths" (Dan. 6:22). Such is the power of faith that can be ours too.