

## **GOING WITH GOD**

### **Sermon Six**

## **DARE TO BE A DANIEL**

### **Daniel 6**

Perhaps one of the most well known stories in all of Scripture is the story of Daniel in the lions den. Since early childhood we have been taught in Sunday School the amazing story of God saving Daniel from the jaws of the lions. This however far more than an interesting Sunday School story but speaks to the very essence of what it means to go with God. Few if any of us would ever find ourselves in a literal lion's den but yet the journey of life may bring us to the place where we face our own lions den, and have to make choices and decisions about going with God when we are looking down into a facing the prospect of a den of hungry lions.

The question we need to ask this morning is simply this, will you and I dare to be a Daniel and go with God whatever the cost?

This morning I want to share just four pictures from this amazing and challenging story.

### **1. A DECEIVED KING vs's 1-9**

King Darius now rules over Babylon and immediately recognises the important role Daniel has to play and appoints him as one of the three administrators over the land. They soon become firm friends. God's plan's and purposes for the Babylonians where once again back on track with Daniel in an influential position. Satan however in this kingdom battle with God that has raged through this story of Daniel, comes against this and uses the other jealous rulers of the land to deceive the King into issuing a decree that he would later regret. The name Satan literally

means “deceiver” and he deceives the king in order that he might destroy Daniel and thwart God’s plans for Babylon. Satan deceives the king through flattery and his own pride. The administrators and satraps appeal through flattery and the pride of the King by suggesting that a decree be issued that for the period of a month people were to worship him alone. They lied to and deceived the King because Daniel had not agreed to this. The king however does not check with Daniel and issues the decree. The king would have been keen to do this to unify all these different peoples under his leadership.

Friends, one of the ways in which we are deceived by Satan is when we are flattered and our pride is appealed to. We often lower our guards and are vulnerable when someone has appealed to our pride and flattered us and hence we may well do things we would regret later. We need to critically evaluate our motives when making

decisions to see whether our ego and pride is being appealed to and in so doing we are being deceived into something we do not realise. King Darius when he realised what he had done deeply regretted his decision and tried his best to undo the decision but was unable to do so. Satan deceived Adam and Eve and appealed to their pride and once the decision was taken, they deeply regretted what they had done but could not undo it.

## **2. A DARING DANIEL vs’s 10-16**

Daniel hears of the decree and realises immediately that he must either choose to go with God or go against Him. At this point Daniel was now well into his eighties. He had walked with God in exile since he was a teenager. For Daniel there was not even a question of a choice to be made. He always had, always did and would always for the rest of his life go with God. He responds to this decree

as he always did when he faced a challenge and needed wisdom, he went home and prayed to God, the very thing the decree had forbidden him to do. He did not do this in secret but opened the windows for all to see. Daniel dared for God. What was the secret that enabled him to dare for God? I want to suggest just three things.

1. He walked in a daily intimate relationship with God. He was God-focussed and not man focussed. He had learnt and experienced that it was God who held kings and nations and even himself in the palm of his hand and that he had to obey God before mere man.
2. He was a man of prayer. We are told that he prayed three times a day to God. In these times of prayer he was able to discover the heart of God for him and God's people and he drew his strength from this. He

was able to lay his burdens before the Lord and know His grace and mercy.

3. He was a man of God's Word. In Daniel 9:2 he notes, "I Daniel understood from the Scriptures according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah..." indicating that he read and trusted the word of the Lord through Jeremiah. He must have read and trusted in Jer 32:27, "I am the Lord the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me" and in Daniel 9:2 he notes that Jeremiah indicated that the exile of the Jews to Babylon would only last seventy years and they would then return to Judah. Daniel held onto these promises from God's word and this strengthened him in facing the lions den.

Daniel knew that if he went with God, God will go with him even into the lion's den. Daniel knew God intimately

and was known intimately by God and it was this reality that enabled him to dare with God. We can only know God as we spend quality time with Him and as we open ourselves to Him, through prayer, His Word and allowing Him to work both in and through us.

### **3. A DEN OF DESTINY vs's 17-23**

In this story the den is referred to as the lions den but I want to change its name to the den of destiny. I want to suggest this change because it reinforces a different focus. We so easily focus on the problem at hand, in this case the hungry lions and miss out seeing God's solution. This was a den of destiny because in it God was shaping Daniel and Judah's future destiny with a miracle that would impact the whole kingdom of Babylon and would lead ultimately to the return of the exiled Judah to the Promised Land. As with the fiery furnace, in the heat of the crisis, God

presences Himself with the believer in their greatest hour of need. In this instance it was the presence of an angel. It is clear from the passage that Daniel was able to visibly see the angel and could then give the testimony that the angel had shut the lion's mouths. God not only saved Daniel by shutting the lion's mouths but he comforted him with the visible presence of the angel to show him that he was not alone. What an awesome God we serve! This was a den of destiny because the miracle that was achieved in it would so impact the heart of the king that it would ultimately influence the destiny of the Jewish nation.

The lesson to be learnt here is simply this. In the heat of the crisis when everything seems to be dark and desperate, in the realms of the kingdom God is working out and influencing our destiny in profound ways. Daniel could see the angel and knew that God was indeed at work but he could not fully understand what God was achieving in

that den. Our God reigns and He is always at work to achieve His purposes even though humanly speaking the opposite seems to be happening.

#### **4. A DESIRED OUTCOME vs's 24-28**

At the end of the experience of Daniel in the den, God had achieved the outcome that He had desired when he allowed the Babylonians to take Judah into exile. You will recall in chapter one that God used the Babylonians to conquer the nation of Judah as punishment for their sin against Him. In the process of Judah being taken to Babylon Daniel as a young teenager is also taken. God not only wanted to punish Judah in exile but he wanted to impact and reach Babylon. Daniel was going to be the man that God would use to do this. As Daniel is released unharmed from the den of lions, Darius issues a decree in verse 26ff, "I issue a decree that in every part of my

kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Israel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He rescued Daniel from the power of the lions". Prior to Judah being taken into exile, Babylon was a pagan nation that did not recognise the true God. Now not only the kingdom of Babylon but also Darius and the Medes Cyrus and the Persians recognised Yahweh as the true God. All this was achieved through men like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego going with God. After seventy years in exile God allowed Judah to return to the Promised Land. They had repented of their sin and followed God, and the pagan nations were now following God. All of this was achieved because Daniel dared for God!

## **CONCLUSION**

Daniel dared to go with God and as a result, not only was God able to do great things through him, but also in him.

In verse 28 we are told that Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. When we dare for God he always pours his favour and blessing in our lives. Will you dare to go with God?