

GOING WITH GOD

Sermon One

“GOD RULES AND OVERRULES”

Daniel 1

As we begin this exciting series in the book of Daniel entitled “Going with God”, we will be following the journey of a young man named Daniel beginning probably at the age of 15 years old when he was taken into exile in Babylon with God’s people and continuing all the way into his eighties when he had become one of the most influential men in the land. As we look at his life over these next few weeks, we will discover that the simple secret of Daniel’s life was the fact that he was a man who went with God and hence the title of the series going with God. God grew this young boy into a mighty man for him and the book of Daniel is the story of how He did this. This book stands both as an encouragement and a challenge to each one of us as to what God can do with a man or woman who is prepared to go with God completely in their lives.

In this first chapter of the book we discover one of the key secrets as to why Daniel was able to go with God. In chapter one, we discover that God is indeed a God who both rules and overrules and whose purposes and plans will not be frustrated but will be fulfilled for the blessing of his people. I want to briefly highlight four ways from our passage in which God does this.

1. GOD GAVE NEBUCHADNEZZAR VICTORY vs’s 1-2

For decades God had warned his people against their sin and idolatry and the punishment they would face if they did not obey. A century before the fall of Jerusalem Isaiah warned the people of this in Isa 39. God would rather have his people living in shameful captivity than living like pagans in the Holy Land. The fall of Jerusalem may have seemed to be a great victory for the pagan God’s and a defeat for the God of Israel, but just the opposite is true, it was indeed a great victory for the covenant God had made with Israel. He had

warned of punishment if they broke the covenant and now he was fulfilling the covenant. The key verse here is verse 2 which tells us, “the Lord delivered Jehoiakim King of Judah into his hand”. Due to the fact that the nation of Israel no longer allowed God to rule in their nation, God chose to overrule them. God is indeed both ruler and overruler. It was God who raised up the Babylonians in order that He might use them to achieve His purposes. It is the ultimate irony that God’s people did not obey him, but Nebuchadnezzar and the pagan Babylonian army did even though they did not realise that they were. So wise is our God that He can permit men and women to make personal choices and still accomplish His purposes in this world. When he isn’t permitted to rule, he will overrule, but His will shall be ultimately done and His name glorified. It is amazing that God can use evil men to achieve righteous purposes. This is the awesome God we love and serve! We need to hold onto this truth as a great source of encouragement that the righteous plans of God will not be frustrated by the forces of evil.

2. GOD GAVE FAVOUR TO DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS vs’s 3-16

Throughout the Scriptures when God’s people rebelled and were punished there always remained a small remnant or handful of people who remained faithful to God. Think of Noah and his family for example. Daniel and his friends who were taken into exile remained faithful to God. How desperate they must have felt having remained faithful but now taken into captivity at the age of 15 with their whole lives ahead of them. They must have been tempted to think that God had abandoned them. Far from abandoning them God had in fact placed these young men at the heart of the Babylonian court to use them to influence the rulers of Babylon. In the midst of their own personal crisis God was going to use them to achieve his purposes. Notice in verse 9, “God had caused the official to show favour and sympathy”. In a situation which humanly speaking seemed out of control, God is ruling and influencing the officials of Babylon. God is great! The key question is this. Why did God show his favour

on Daniel and the answer is to be found in verse 8 with three simple words, “but Daniel resolved...”. What did Daniel resolve to do? Not to defile himself and in essence to go with God. Even though he did not understand why as a faithful servant he had been brought to Babylon, he resolved, decided, chose to go with God and because of this God showed his favour to him. God was ruling and overruling in showing favour to Daniel.

For each one of us on the journey of life there comes a moment in which we have to resolve to do it our way, or go with God even though the consequences seem so frightening. The objective of the training these young men was to remove their Hebrew traditions and convert them into being Babylonians. They had however resolved that this would not happen. They had the choice of being conformers, people controlled by the pressures from without, or transformers people controlled by the power within. Daniel instead of asking how I can get out of this, asked what can I get out of

this? They chose to go with God in their negative situation so that they could transform it rather than conforming to it.

3. GOD GAVE ABILITY AND SUCCESS TO DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS vs's 17-20

Having placed Daniel and his friends in the courts of Babylon in order that he might achieve his purposes in and through them, he now continues to rule and overrule by equipping them for success in the task He had called them to do. Note verse 17, “To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning”. These young men must have felt completely overwhelmed by the challenge that lay ahead of them, but God overruled and demonstrated a powerful principle of the Kingdom. When God calls and sends, he always equips. God gave to Daniel a special ability to interpret visions and dreams. In the beginning of the book he interpreted the visions and dreams of others but in the end he received visions of his own from the Lord. God ruled and overruled.

4. GOD GAVE DANIEL A LONG LIFE AND MINISTRY vs 21

When Daniel went as a teenager into Babylon he must have thought that his future was very uncertain and that his life could possibly have been very short. God however blessed him with a long life and ministry. When he received the visions in chapters 10-12 he would have been about eighty three years old. During his long life he had the opportunity to witness to Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Belshazzar and Cyrus as well as all the court officers who came and went. In order to accomplish His plans for His people God sometimes places people in positions of influence. He put Joseph in the court of Pharaoh and Esther and Mordecai in the Persian court. Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer in Susa and was able to get royal assistance to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Daniel at a young age had resolved to go with God and God honoured him for this with a long life and ministry. This does not guarantee a long life for all of God's faithful servants.

God may have different plans for us but he does honour our obedience.

CONCLUSION

This first chapter should be a great source of encouragement to us when we experience trials and testings and become discouraged; for when God is not allowed to rule, He overrules. God is still on the throne and will never leave us nor forsake us.

When the temple was destroyed and people taken captive there was still a Godly remnant that He could use. God will keep the Godly remnant undefiled and put them into places of influence for His purposes. The same God who calls you also equips you for the great things he desires to achieve both in and through you.

The question this morning is simply this. Are you going to go with the God who rules and overrules. If your answer is yes then you like Daniel need to resolve in your heart to go with Him.