

¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. ¹¹ Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. ¹² And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." ¹³ So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day." ¹⁴ And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. ¹⁵ Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed." ¹⁶ So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." ¹⁷ Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed. ¹⁸ Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. ¹⁹ Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" ²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." ²³ Then the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

Text: Daniel 6:10-23 A 1/22/17 Romans 8:24-30 Luke 4:38-44 Psalm 23 Resp. Rdg. fr. Ps. 34
Hymns: 39, 518 (1-3, 7), 651, 761

REMAIN FAITHFUL TO OUR FAITHFUL GOD

If thou but suffer God to guide thee
And hope in Him through all thy ways,
He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days.
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the Rock that naught can move. (TLH #518:1)

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

We just heard the familiar story of Daniel in the lions' den. From this story we're encouraged to **REMAIN FAITHFUL TO OUR FAITHFUL GOD.**

God had warned His rebellious Old Testament people that if they didn't repent and turn to Him He was going to allow the Babylonians to defeat them and take them into captivity. For years and years God patiently gave His people time to repent. But they ignored God and stubbornly continued in their unbelieving ways, so God's judgment finally came. Included among the Jews who were taken into captivity in Babylon was a young man named Daniel; a sincere believer who faithfully served the Lord.

It wasn't Daniel's fault that most of his fellow Jews wouldn't listen to God. And yet Daniel and other believers had to suffer along with them. Daniel could have given himself permission to be bitter and resentful toward his fellow Jews and toward God, and feel sorry for himself, but he didn't. Instead he accepted God's will for him and his countrymen, and kept loving and trusting in God, and serving Him.

The Bible says, "*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Pet. 5:6-7). We live in a sinful world, and things sometimes go wrong. When the Lord puts us through things that are hard on us, we know He is still with us. God's love for us never changes. We can continue to place our hope and trust in Him, knowing that our heavenly Father knows what's best for us. He will take care of us and make a way for us.

The book of Daniel says that the king of Babylon looked among the Jews for "*young men ... gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace. ... And among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah;*" who were renamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (Dan. 1:4, 7) – the three men in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3). "*Therefore they served before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.*" (Dan. 1:19-20). God blessed Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego with much wisdom. The king's Babylonian advisers were extremely jealous of Daniel, and 'had it out' for him. Daniel kept faithfully following God, and trusting in Him.

The Bible says, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths*" (Prov. 3:5-6). Often what other people do and what happens in life is out of our control. But God is in

control of our lives, always and ultimately causing *“all things to work together for [our] good”* (Ro. 8:28). We can keep going, placing our trust in God and His Word.

In time a different king came into power in Babylon. He planned to make Daniel his chief adviser *“over the whole realm”* (Dan. 6:3). The Babylonian advisers were so jealous of Daniel that they tricked the king into having Daniel sentenced to death. Knowing that Daniel worshipped God, they advised the king to decree that for the next 30 days anyone who petitioned any person or god other than the king would be executed. Not knowing his advisers were plotting to get Daniel killed, the king agreed to their counsel and signed the decree into law.

We're told, *“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.”* (If Daniel stopped doing this, what kind of witness would it give?) Even though he knew he would be sentenced to death for it, Daniel continued to faithfully worship and serve God. The Babylonian advisers informed the king that Daniel was breaking his law. The king really liked and admired Daniel, and tried to have his command reversed. But he couldn't because, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, once a king made a law it couldn't be changed. The king knew he had been tricked by his advisers, but there was nothing he could do about it.

Jesus says, *“Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven”* (Mt. 10:32-33). *“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10). God help us; even should it cost us our life, we cannot and will not deny our Lord Jesus and stop worshipping Him and following Him. If we're threatened with martyrdom, the Lord will either deliver us from it, or through it take us to heaven.

Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, but, we're told, *“No injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.”* Daniel was able to remain faithful to God even to the point of being thrown into the lions' den by looking to God for the strength he needed. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells about many of God's Old Testament believers who, by faith, did amazing things, and faced terrible difficulties. They were able to do it, we're told, because *“out of weakness [God] made [them] strong”* (He. 11:34).

The king was so amazed and grateful that the lions didn't kill Daniel that he issued the following decree: *“In every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions”* (Dan. 6:26-27). Daniel's example of faith, his miraculous deliverance by God from the

lions' den, and the opportunities he had to tell people about salvation in the Messiah were a powerful witness to the Babylonian people. We hope that the king and many more of those under the rule of the Babylonian empire came to believe in God. Part of God's purpose in allowing Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and his other believing people to be taken into captivity in Babylon was so that His Word could be spread among all those gentiles in the Babylonian Empire. This may be why, centuries later, the believing gentile wise men made their long journey to Bethlehem to worship the child Jesus.

Long before the Babylonian Captivity ever took place God not only warned His people that it was coming if they didn't repent, He also made them a promise: "*When seventy years are completed, ... I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation ... for their iniquity. ... I will ... cause you to return to this place*" (Jer. 25:12; 29:10). "*Cyrus ... shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid'*" (fr. Is. 44:28 - 45:1). That promise gave God's people hope during their seventy years of captivity. After seventy years God kept His Word. He raised up the Persian king Cyrus to defeat the Babylonians and allow God's people to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the temple. Daniel also served during the reign of Cyrus, so Daniel lived to see that day. He eventually died and is in heaven now.

The Apostle Paul says, "*To live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Philip. 1:21). Jesus loves us so much that He gave His life on the cross to save us from our sins. We believe in Jesus. We love Jesus and we want to live our lives in Him and for Him. Like Daniel, we want others to see Jesus in us and we want to tell them about Jesus so they can believe in Him and be saved, too. We know that in everything we go through in life Jesus is with us, seeing us safely through it all. And we know that one day Jesus will take us to heaven to live with Him forever. Dear Christian friends, **REMAIN FAITHFUL TO OUR FAITHFUL GOD.**

Be patient and await His leisure
 In cheerful hope, with heart content
 To take whate'er thy Father's pleasure
 And His discerning love hath sent,
 Nor doubt our inmost wants are known
 To Him who chose us for His own.

Sing, pray, and keep His ways unswerving,
 Perform thy duties faithfully,
 And trust His Word, though undeserving,
 Thou yet shalt find it true for thee.
 God never yet forsook in need
 The soul that trusted Him indeed. Amen. (TLH #518:3, 7)