

Daniel in the Lions' Den

AIM: to teach my pupils to be like Daniel

POINT OF CONTACT: Talk for a while about the different types of people in the Bible. There are two great groups of converted people in the Bible: (1) the group of people who were converted from terrible sin and whose lives were completely transformed (the woman at the well, the Apostle Paul, the woman of Magdala [Mary Magdalene], etc. are in this group); (2) the group of people who, from childhood, never wavered. Yes, they had to be converted just like the fallen people did, but their morals and principles never wavered. In this group would be Samuel, John the Baptist, Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego and, of course, Daniel. Stress to the pupils that this is the kind of testimony that we want them to have.

INTRODUCTION: Daniel stood the test as a youth—coming to Babylonian headquarters to stay, and yet standing for what was right. Now he comes to a bigger test. He is the second biggest man in the kingdom. Let us notice this test.

I. THE TESTING.

Study Daniel 6. (Teacher, simply tell the story of Daniel's promotion to the second place in the kingdom. He was right under the king. The men under Daniel became jealous and tricked the king into signing a decree that was wicked. Tell that Daniel realized that his continual praying, as his custom had been, would lead him to be cast into a den of lions. Tell that the angel of the Lord came and delivered him and that the king came and promoted Daniel even higher because he stood the test.)

1. Daniel as a youth got into the habit of standing for what was right. In the early days of his life in Babylon, he stood for little things. Now he stands for big things. This is why it is important that our children develop character to stand for right things at school. When the spoils become greater and the temptations larger, they will be in the habit of standing. One is not likely all of a sudden to start standing for right in the big testing if he is not conditioned to stand for right in the little testing. Daniel did not decide to go in the lions' den in chapter six; he decided to go in the lions' den in chapter one, for Daniel decided then to do right in every case. He did right in little cases and was conditioned, trained and strengthened to do right in big cases.
2. Daniel had stood for right through the years. It has been many years now since chapter one. Daniel stood for right in the Babylonian Empire. Now the Medes and Persians have taken over. It is another empire completely, and yet Daniel is still doing right. Thank God for those who stand right through the years!
3. Daniel was a good worker in both kingdoms. He had been a great man in the Babylonian Kingdom that had been conquered, and for that reason, one would think that he should have been looked upon as an enemy and, as such, would have been imprisoned or banished. He was a native of a foreign kingdom and then a member of a ruined kingdom. Because of that, he might have been despised as a stranger, captive and enemy, but Daniel was a hard worker and one who did his job well. Darius, the new king, could see this.
4. Everything eventually settles to what it is. Read this statement very carefully again and again. (It is one of the most important truths of life.) Everything eventually settles to what it is! EVERYTHING EVENTUALLY SETTLES TO WHAT IT IS! We are so concerned about teaching our children to do things, and well we might; but the biggest concern is to teach our children to be something. If a person becomes what he ought to become, he will do what he ought to do. The important thing is building character, not talent. Character will develop talent; talent developed first will usually not see the need for character. Character has eyes; talent is blind. Talent may cause a person to rise for a while; but he will eventually settle, not to what he can do, but to what he is. If parents could only understand that the important thing is not developing talent in their children but developing character in their children. Character will enable the child to see what he ought to do. This is so important, so vital.
5. Daniel had a good spirit in him. See Daniel 6:3b, "An excellent spirit was in him." This is a tremendous

statement. Not only did he stand, but he had a good spirit. It is easy for Christians to become fundamental and not have the proper spirit. A spirit of love, a spirit of cooperation, a spirit of humility, etc. are vital to go with standing. Now bear in mind, they are not good substitutes for standing. Daniel stood! Some would have said he was stubborn, but God said he had "an excellent spirit." What a tremendous combination Daniel had!

6. Because of Daniel's promotion, and because of his excellent spirit, he was envied and hated by those under him. Study Daniel 6:1-4. A chief had been placed over every province that belonged to the empire of the Medes and Persians. There were 120 of these. Afterwards we find it enlarged to 127 by the victories of Cambyses and Darius Hystaspes. (Josephus even says that later there were 360.) The 120 were divided into groups of 40 with a president over each one. This means there were three presidents. The king placed Daniel over the presidents. This partiality of the king toward Daniel made him the object of the envy of the other presidents and leaders of the kingdom. Because they were envious and jealous, they sought to hurt him. We should teach our youth that the more right they do, the more they will be envied. Ecclesiastes 4:4b says, "And every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour."

7. They could find no fault in Daniel. Read Daniel 6:5. Here is a tremendous verse. They found no blemish in his administration. He was faithful to his king. He was faithful to his God. Hence, they had to construe his faithfulness to his God as a crime. It is an excellent thing, and certainly to the glory of God, when those who profess Christianity conduct themselves in such a manner in their whole conversation that the most watchful and critical of enemies find no occasion for blaming them. In other words, the only criticism that could come was that he was a fanatic, that he was too devoted to his God. Let those of us who stand for Christ be sure that our lives are consistent to our stand.

8. The enemies tricked Daniel by using his devotion to his God. See Daniel 6:7-9. They knew that Daniel prayed three times a day with his window open and his face turned toward Jerusalem. When the Jews were in distant countries, in prayer they turned their faces toward Jerusalem. When in Jerusalem, they turned their faces toward the temple. Solomon, in his prayer of dedication at the temple in I Kings 8:48, asked God to hear the prayers of those who might be in strange lands or in captivity when they should turn their faces toward their own land which God gave unto their fathers and toward the city which He had chosen and the house which was dedicated to His name. Daniel was in a foreign land; hence, he turned his face toward Jerusalem. The doing of this meant that he had gone against the king's decree and would be cast into the den of lions.

9. Daniel did nothing different to be cast into the den of lions or to stand the test. Had he not been praying in this manner, he should not have started praying in this manner. However, he had prayed in this manner; and he should not change or yield his convictions. We should do what we think is right before the testing time comes and continue to do what is right when the testing time comes. We should not be looking for testing or running from testing, looking for persecution or running from persecution. We should simply do what is right to do. This was the case with Daniel.

10. Let us look at Daniel's prayer life for a minute:

1) He prayed in his house. No doubt sometimes he prayed alone and sometimes with his family; nevertheless, he prayed in his house. Every house should be a house of prayer. The tragic thing is that many homes, even in good churches, yes, even in Victory Baptist Church, do not have prayer offered. The Bible says in Acts 10:30 that Cornelius was a man who prayed in his house; hence, every house not only may be but ought to be a house of prayer.

2) In every prayer he gave thanks. This is certainly important. We should include thanksgiving with our praying.

3) He prayed upon his knees. Now, whether or not we pray upon our knees is not the big thing, but we ought to have that kind of humility in our hearts.

4) He opened the windows of his chamber. He did not do this to show off. He had been doing this all along. He simply was not willing to change. He was certainly not ashamed of his Christ.

5) He did it three times a day. David said in Psalm 55:17a, "Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray." He had hours of prayer and special seasons of prayer. This is important in order for a person to be a good Christian.

6) The key words in all of Daniel's standing are found in Daniel 6:10d, "as he did aforetime." What this really means is "as usual."

II. THE PROMOTION.

1. God sent His angel to Daniel. Read Daniel 6:22. The word "angel" in the Bible simply means "messenger." God sent His messenger. It implies here "His special messenger." No doubt this is the Lord Jesus Christ, the same One Who attended Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in the fiery furnace. He came in to Daniel and shut the mouths of the lions.

2. Darius was convinced that Daniel's God was a living God. See Daniel 6:26. People could see in Daniel that his God was alive. Ah, would it be true in us!

3. Daniel was promoted. Notice Daniel 6:28. Daniel served five kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus. Few men could have survived so long a reign and served so many masters without flattering any and yet being successful to all as was Daniel!