

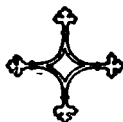
DANIEL

AND HIS

COMPANIONS

By C. KNAPP

Author of "Life and Times of Samuel the Prophet,"
"The Time of Harvest," "Tales of Grace," "Staff and Sceptre,"
"A Fruitful Bough," "Alsatian Stories of Long Ago," etc.



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FOREWORD

The four following papers are not in any sense intended as anything like an exposition of the portions of the book of Daniel; nor yet do they make any allusion to the prophecies of the book, except in the most incidental way. Their object is wholly a practical one, and to be read in view of the lessons, moral and spiritual, suggested by them in the review of the conduct and exercises of "this Daniel" and his companions.

C. KNAPP.

DANIEL AND HIS COMPANIONS

Preparation for Testimony and Service

(Chapter 1.)

THE first chapter of the book of Daniel is historical, and God's object in putting it on record in His Word is evidently to show us the way, morally, in which Daniel and his companions came to attain to the eminence accorded them in the land of their captivity; Daniel becoming one of the king's chief counsellors, and later, prime minister of the realm. His three companions also take an honorable share in this testimony for God in the midst of the darkness and idolatry of the land of their exile.

As an introduction to the prophecies contained in that book, the importance of this first chapter lies in the lessons it affords believers, especially those young in the faith, as to the moral preparation for usefulness in the kingdom of God. With this sole object in view let us examine its record, and see wherein these youths may be taken as examples for all who would be strong in faith and useful for God in this day, when there is so much need for "young men who are strong," because they "have overcome the wicked one."

Before proceeding with our examination, let us remember that while Scripture says, "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is the judge: He putteth down one, and

setteth up another" (Ps. 75: 6, 7), He does it not arbitrarily, nor irrespective of fitness or merit. No, His sovereignty does not set aside the question of moral fitness or proper preparation of those He is pleased to advance in His service.

It will be profitable, I believe, to notice the names of these four "children of Judah," Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah, with their generally understood significances.

Speaking of these, a writer remarks: "It does not appear that they are mentioned here particularly on account of any distinction of birth or rank; for though they were among the noble and promising youth of Israel, yet it is clear that others of the same rank and promise also were selected (ver. 3)." "Daniel" is said to mean *judge of God*—one who acts as judge in the name of God. This, in a very marked way, Daniel was permitted to do; this high honor was his: he "sat in the gate of the king" (ch. 2: 49). And the Christian, taught of God, having his "senses exercised to discern both good and evil," will have "the mind of Christ," and be enabled to assist others in the mind of God, as revealed in His written Word. Thus he is permitted to judge for God, and become in this way a "Daniel."

But how did Daniel attain to this high honor? In what way or by what path did he reach this preeminence in the kingdom? Was it through a mere chain of favorable circumstances, or did he leap to the top at one bound? Christians sing enthusiastically and in full chorus, "Dare to be a Daniel!" but it requires something very different from mere daring to become a man of Daniel's stamp; he attained to be a "judge of God"

through self-discipline and faithfulness amid great temptations: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank."

This noble attitude of Daniel has been lowered by some expositors to a mere natural morality, "refusing," they say, "to indulge himself in the delights of the table, or touch the intoxicating cup." It has been made to do duty as a basis for temperance lectures and sermons innumerable, to the hiding of the highly spiritual significance of the act. We believe Daniel did not refuse to eat of the king's meat and drink of the king's wine because of anything essentially wrong or dangerous in them, but because heathen monarchs usually offered them to their idols; so, for this, or similar causes, he refused to partake of the provision appointed him from the king's table. (See Ezek. 4: 13; Hos. 9: 3 and comp. 1 Cor. 8).

Daniel's companions manifestly shared his convictions; and encouraged by his example they associated themselves with him in his holy resolution. Being the leading spirit in the matter, he made himself their spokesman; it is to their everlasting credit that they were prepared to follow him. All are not born for leadership, but in the coming day, both led and leader shall each have his proper praise from God. Happy the man who, like Daniel, leads in ways according to God; and equally happy those sufficiently alert and humble to follow any who like Paul can say, "Follow me as I follow Christ." One raised up of God and qualified to lead will not *demand* that he be followed; he may invite and encourage, and those who are like-minded with Daniel's companions are only too glad to

follow in the path they recognize to be of God: it is the privilege of all to hold with and suffer along with those who are manifestly chosen of God to guide and feed the flock.

Daniel's name was changed to Belteshazzar, which according to Gesenius signifies, "*Bel's prince*," or "*he whom Bel favors*." This may have been a snare of Satan to draw Daniel away from the worship of the one true God, by giving him a name and place of honor with the principal god of the land, and so, from loyalty to the God whose name was interwoven with that given him by his parents in Israel. So cunning is the enemy of God and of our souls, who seeks, both by flattery and force, to turn us from loyalty to Christ, whose blessed name is called upon us—"Christians." Flattery is tried on Daniel and his fellows first; and when this fails to seduce them to idolatry, the burning fiery furnace and the lions' den are tried.

Hananiah means *the grace of Jah*, which would remind him of the grace of God bestowed upon him. This the enemy changed to Shadrach, which according to one authority means, "*Young friend of the king*;" another takes it to mean, "*Rejoicing in the way*," which Gesenius prefers. Of this a godly commentator says: "In either signification it would contribute to a forgetfulness of the former name, and tend to obliterate the remembrance of the early training in the service of Jehovah."

The meaning of the name Mishael is, "*Who is what God is?*" or "*Who is like God?*" It would thus remind its possessor of the greatness and majesty of the God of his fathers, and thus be a means to preserve him from

rendering homage to the idol-gods about him. Meshach was the name given him in exchange; its meaning appears to be somewhat doubtful. The word in Persian means, "*A little sheep*" (*ovicula*), according to Gesenius. Why this name was given him by his captors is not clear. If because of his natural beauty, his gentle disposition, nothing would tend more to draw his thoughts away from God, and fix them on himself. Thus pride would find place in his heart, and God be displaced by self. Oh, the cunning of Satan! He knows the baits that the soul is most ready to take, and if he cannot seduce by one means he has a thousand others to set temptingly before us. Pride was his own sin, so he knows by wretched experience its potency to seduce the soul into rebellion and ruin.

Azariah's name means, "*Helped of Jah;*" for this good Hebrew appellation they fastened upon him the heathen *Abed-nego*, *i. e.*, *a servant of Nego (or Nebo)*. This was another false god of the Babylonians whose name was compounded with that of *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Nebushasban*, and *Nebuzaradan* (Jer. 39: 13; 39: 9), besides others mentioned by classical writers. In this was a suggestion that he was consecrated to the service of this *Nego*. The king, with many others of eminence, felt themselves honored in bearing this name. It was eminently adapted to flatter the young captive's pride, and draw him away from the *Jehovah* God of his early days. "It was only extraordinary grace," an esteemed writer remarks, "which could have kept these youths in the paths of their early training, and in the faithful service of that God to whom they had been early consecrated, amidst the temptations by which they were

now surrounded in a foreign land, and the influences which were employed to alienate them from the God of their fathers."

All honor, then, to the memory of these Hebrew youths, who from the very commencement of their exile stood firm, as they stood together, and would not be defiled or drawn away by the subtle allurements of the corrupt court of the mightiest monarch on earth. At a later day there were "those of Cæsar's household" who pertained to "the household of faith," who through the imprisoned apostle sent greetings to their brethren elsewhere (Phil. 4: 22).

Dear young Christians, begin early to "stand fast in the Lord." From the very start, purpose in your heart that you will not defile your soul by eating of the world's food, which is after all but "husks" to the one who has found and makes all of Christ. And no matter what your circumstances or environment, remember the situation of this quartette of young worthies, and like them, keep yourself clean from things forbidden in the Word. The world has its "meats," to surfeit and dull your spiritual perception, as also its "wine" to intoxicate the spirit, and cause you to forget Him who never will forget, but who, having died for you, will love you to the end. He is worthy of your loyalty; live for Him, and fear Him *alone!*

Later in life it was given the three friends of Daniel to prove the faithfulness of God in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. Daniel himself was cast into the lions' den for his faithful confession of his God. This honor have not all His saints. Few of them, perhaps, would be equal to it; and He only permitted the fiery trial to

these confessors after a course of training that would fit and prepare them for such testing. In the beginning He brought them into loving favor with the king's steward, that they might be spared a testing of their faith too soon in their spiritual life—before they were well able to bear it. How gracious, how considerate, how tender is our God, who in the days of yore led not His people "through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt" (Exod. 13: 17).

May He help us all, both old and young, to be ever true to Him, and let nothing turn us aside or allure us from Him whose love is so tender and whose grace is so great.

“The Fiery Trial”

(Chapter 3.)

THOUGH Daniel's name does not appear in this third chapter of the book called after his name, it may be gathered from the preceding one that his continued association with God's three noble witnesses, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, had much to do with their firmness later in refusing to bow down themselves to Nebuchadnezzar's image. For we read there that when that despotic and merciless monarch threatened to kill all the wise men of Babylon, because of their inability to declare to him his dream, "Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." He sought their fellowship in prayer, and their faith was no doubt greatly strengthened by seeing the good hand of God so signally displayed for their preservation, when the matter was revealed to Daniel in answer to their united prayers. It must have prepared them for the fiery ordeal through which they were soon to pass. This association in prayer not only secured to Daniel the desired revelation, but it also prepared them for the further testing of their faith.

It is beautiful to see that Daniel, in his thanksgiving to God, links them with him as having a part in the revelation made known to him. He says, "I thank

Thee and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me what *we* desired of Thee: for Thou hast made known unto *us* the king's matter" (chap. 2: 24). And in verse 36 he says, "This is the dream; and *we* will tell the interpretation thereof before the king." This linking of his companions with himself before the king, as he had previously done before God in thanksgiving, is very lovely, and speaks loudly for the unselfish humility and generosity of heart of this "man greatly beloved." (See chap. 10: 11.) And with increasing admiration we read, in the last verse, that Daniel "requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

It is to be noted, too, that in the fellowship of prayer with Daniel, their Hebrew names are given; but here, as in the following chapter, they are called by the heathen names saddled upon them by their Gentile captors. They might force upon them the names of their idols, but subdue their hearts to bow down to them they could not. Contact with the world we cannot avoid, but we may and should refuse to accommodate ourselves to its spirit, and especially guard against playing fast and loose with conscience.

Nebuchadnezzar has his image manufactured and set up in the plain of Dura, and his subjects make no scruple of abjectly obeying his high-sounding edict, and bowing themselves down to it. Gold dazzles the ungodly, and fear of the great makes them slaves to man. Music too has its seductive effect over the senses. So we read, "When all the people heard the sound of the

cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up." The instrument "dulcimer" is also mentioned in the herald's proclamation (ver. 5); and the marginal reading for this is "singing," or "symphony." Music truly has its charms, as gold its glitter; so is pleasure, and getting wealth, and love of praise from man ensnaring souls to-day—not only the open sinner and the ungodly, but, alas, many of the professed people of God as well.

But what influenced others, and brought them to their knees before the imposing image of the king, did not in the least affect the three Hebrew witnesses; they unflinchingly refused to bow the knee. We might have known nothing of it but for "certain Chaldeans" who "came near and accused the Jews." Their faithfulness is brought out by these Chaldean accusers, whose base wickedness and despicable chicanery is the more manifest when it is remembered that it was to the faithful prayers of these very "Jews" that they owed their lives; for had not their God revealed to them the king's forgotten dream, they had ere this lost their heads—"been cut in pieces and their houses made a dunghill" (chap. 2: 5).

Ingratitude is one of the signal sins of the last days, as it was from the beginning of man's departure from God into the debasing idolatry of the Egyptians, the Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks and Romans. (See 2 Tim. 3: 2; Rom. 1: 21.) "Be ye thankful," is an exhortation to Christians that they do well to remember (Col. 3: 15).

"There are certain Jews," these treacherous men say to the king, "whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." They would cunningly augment the wrath of the king against these "certain Jews" by covertly reminding him of the advancement he had given them by setting them over the affairs of the province of Babylon. Truly, favors conceded by or asked for of the world are of doubtful advantage to the faithful; they as often prove "live bombs," or blessings hardly worth the having. And if such may be said of favors granted willingly by the world, what shall be thought of those advantages obtained from it by Christians at the cost of compromise and departure from the express Word of God?—as association in business with the ungodly, the joining of trade unions, unequal yokes in marriage, fraternizing with unbelievers in sports or social affairs, etc.

"Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king." And "men," in the truest sense of that word, they proved themselves to be. We often speak of them as "the three Hebrew children," but they played the *man* before the infuriated king, and were not moved by his fierce countenance or by his threatening words. "Is it true?" he demands; "Do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?"

Yes, it was true. They were men of moral fibre, men of faith, men who had convictions, and for these

convictions they were prepared to go into the fire, if needs be, to die rather than violate their conscience, or deny the one true God—their God, to whom alone they directed their prayers, to whom alone they rendered worship, and whom they feared above earthly potentates. Hear their noble reply to the king's furious threats and defiant blasphemies, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of *my* hands?" Calmly they reply: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." What a direct, unequivocal answer to the mighty Nebuchadnezzar! An answer worthy to be treasured in the memory of all who would keep themselves, at all cost, "unspotted from the world," maintain a good conscience, and stand uncompromisingly for the truth in the face of the world's hostility in whatever form it may take.

And though persecution by fire and sword has largely ceased since the Protestant Reformation, because of the light given through the reading of the Bible, there is to-day a more seductive and effectual effort put forth by the enemy of Christ and Christians, to cause them to temporize, and step down from their testimony against the high thoughts of man exalting himself against the knowledge of God and His Christ. If, in our day, the devil cannot drag us to the stake to compel us to deny our Lord, he can use very seductive methods to accomplish his crafty designs. It matters

not by what means, if he can induce us to court the world's smile, to fear its scorn or the loss of its friendship and attendant temporal advantages; he will use the fear of being thought "not up-to-date," for refusing to accept darkness for light, evolution for truth, modernism for Christianity, and godless pleasure for the quiet joy of fellowship with Christ and comfort of the Scriptures which testify of Him. O fellow-believer, the snares are many! Stand fast in the Lord and in your testimony for Him in the presence of the colossal image of this "twentieth century civilization." Let your Yea be yea, and your Nay, nay!

Nebuchadnezzar "commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," as if he thought that by this braggart show of power he might yet frighten God's witnesses into submission to his decree. And the god of this world, the prince of darkness, would fain scare us, or shame us, out of our position of "No surrender" by using his most mighty men, his "leading scientists," his 'consensus of best theological opinion,' his "world's best scholarship," its "best thinkers," and what not?—all high sounding terms, boastful "bests," as if a Christian standing in the might and faith of God could be moved to bow to their image by the mere noise of names and terms.

Well, into the furnace this noble band of non-conformists go. In their own garments they are bound, then "cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace." But the fire that was meant to consume them but burns the bands! Their mad persecutor, beholding them unharmed in his glowing furnace, was compelled

to cry to his counsellors, "Lo, I see *four men loose*, walking in the midst of the fire; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God!" Yes, they company with the Angel of His Presence, as on other occasions He appeared to His tried and faithful saints in His precarnate days. So will it be with all who refuse to bow to the image, whatever its form; they will walk free; their souls will be in liberty; and, best of all, they will have *His* company who hath said: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

From persecutor Nebuchadnezzar turns patron:—"The king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon." This they were not required to resist; and, let us hope, that it as little moved them from their attitude toward his gods as had his threats and his furnace of fire.

Christian, if you have, by grace, resisted the trend of modern thought against God and His truth, beware that you fall not by its patronage; for be assured that the world's smiles and kisses are far more to be feared, for most of us, than its machinery of terrorism and coercion. God help us to heed well His heartening word, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16: 13).

“To the Lions”

(Chapter 6.)

THE demand to-day for young men is insistent—in business, in politics, in educational institutions, and even in the so-called “Christian ministry,” young men are demanded, while the older, in spite of their knowledge, experience and more matured judgment, are either deliberately set aside or quietly crowded out. It is the spirit of the age:—smartness and dash are required for “success,” and youth would teach its elders wisdom. Such an one as “Paul the aged” would be looked upon in most quarters as having about out-lived his usefulness and fit only to be superannuated. This preference for youth appears to work fairly well whilst things are moving almost of themselves from the impetus given them by these same men now considered eligible for the list of the “honorably retired;” but it is noticed that in times of grave crises, as in the late World War, it is after all the men advanced in life who have to step into the breach, and by wise counsel and well-considered action, save the day. And here in the chapter before us, we have, not young men, but old, as the principal actors. Darius himself “being about threescore and two years old” (chap. 5: 31), and Daniel much older still. “Behold, thou art old” (1 Sam. 8: 4, 5), an ungrateful people said complainingly of one of the best leaders it was ever a nation’s good fortune to possess.

Daniel's promotion here is not the result of any miraculous intervention on God's part as was the case under the mighty Nebuchadnezzar; he attained to his exalted post on his recognized merit alone, as it is written: "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." Even though his bitter enemies eagerly sought it, "They could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful; neither was there any error or fault found in him." What a testimony to a saint of God set in a most difficult, because high, position! Would that all to-day filling much lower and far easier posts had a like testimony from their fellows. If the *enemy* was compelled to acknowledge that there could be found neither fault nor error in Daniel, how does it come that the very *friends* of Christians can scarcely say as much concerning them? "A good testimony from them that are without" is of far greater importance than marked ability to preach or talk about the holy things of God.

"Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." In the everyday affairs of life and public office there was nothing in the conduct of this Daniel on which they could lay a finger or prefer a charge. He stood blameless before all; and it was only in the matter of his religion, as men say, that they hoped to find opportunity for his ruin. And if this could be said of one like Daniel, living as he did in a dispensation of shadows (when God had as yet but partially revealed Himself), in an alien's land, and

far and long removed from all the regular channels of blessing and ministry, shut off probably from intercourse with his brethren in the faith—if he, under adverse circumstances such as these, so lived that nothing could be laid to his charge, how inexcusable are those Christians to-day who with all their superior advantages lay themselves open to censure by their inconsistencies and wrong-doings! "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody (overseer, N. T.) in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4: 15, 16). Slander, misrepresentation, reproach, persecution for Christ's sake, all His true followers must expect; this He has promised them and none may hope to escape. But to suffer for one's transgressions—as too many do, alas—for this there is just cause for shame; and God, instead of being glorified by such suffering in His children, is the rather blasphemed among those of the world who see their evil works.

A plot is formed by Daniel's enemies for his undoing as they hoped. By an unalterable decree it was forbidden to make petition to any god or man for thirty days, save only to the king. The penalty attached to non-conformity to this malevolent edict was to be cast to the lions. This would serve the double purpose of flattering king Darius and ridding themselves of their envied rival. And such was their confidence in Daniel's integrity "concerning the law of his God" that they felt sure he would not leave off praying openly to Him, even at the cost of his life. Have *our* enemies—aye,

have our *friends*, like confidence in our faithfulness toward God and His Christ? It may be doubted; let the question search our consciences, and exercise, yea, exercise deeply, our hearts!

“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.” Daniel’s conduct here is most beautiful, whether viewed in the light of his deep faithfulness, or as displaying his heaven-born wisdom. His was no act of bravado in defiance of the king’s decree. His windows were already open—not opened ostentatiously as if eager to show off his boldness. His regular times for prayer, his kneeling attitude, his facing Jerusalem, all was “as he did aforetime.” It was no new manner with him, but in accordance with his former habit. This was known to his enemies, and to have prayed in secret, while it might have spared him the ordeal of the lions’ den, would have betrayed his testimony for his God. This Daniel well knew, doubtless, and he therefore wisely and boldly followed his accustomed practice, fully aware of the consequences to himself.

“Wiser than Daniel” (Ezek. 28: 3) does not suggest to us, in the light of his conduct here, either worldly prudence or that so-called “moderation” so frequently commended to the faithful believer by his less zealous associates. “Pray in secret,” they would have advised; “God will as readily hear you there; why should you tempt Providence and risk your valuable life when you might so easily avoid a public display of your

piety?" But Daniel did not so salve his conscience; he would not compromise his profession by being missed from his usual devotions. He valued the honor of his God above his life.

It is little wonder therefore that the intercessions of such a man became a subject of fame even in his own day. (See Ezek. 14: 14.) What he did was done advisedly, deliberately, and in strict accordance with all godly and consistent conduct. He not only made a conscience of prayer, but had regard for the consciences of others as well—not only to be an example of faithfulness to his fellow-exiles, but a witness also to the consciences of his enemies. Satan must surely have thought he could not possibly fail to score a triumph here; for if Daniel saved his life, this "murderer from the beginning" might have reasoned, he must do so to the dishonor of his God. In either case, seemingly, Satan must gain an advantage—either in the destruction of this hated Hebrew in high places, or in the destruction of his influence as a worshiper of the one true God of heaven and earth, as against the idols of the realm, through whom Satan himself obtained homage from men. So God through the wisely directed courage of His servant turned the counsel of this wiser than Ahithophel into foolishness.

Daniel's faith was to be tried to the utmost; the law forbidding his prayer—as a "law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not"—must be executed, and Satan is permitted to go his limit. "Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God." His was no formal prayer-saying; in praying he was "making supplication"—

that is prayer in its most intensified form, an earnest calling on God, "fervent, effectual," as if his requests could not be denied him. And he probably prayed more for others than he did for himself, as the 9th chapter gives a remarkable example, and as men eminent in prayer frequently do.

His enemies are not slow to report him: "Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day." Mark the cunning of these servants of the evil one; they remind the king that he was of a captive people, hoping thus to make his disobedience appear the more reprehensible to the king—as if, out of gratitude to the king for his promotion, a man of such origin should surely feel obligated to obey his sovereign's mandate. They would couple ingratitude with his act of disobedience. They would also make it appear as if the decree was wholly the king's, while they themselves, cunningly, were the real authors of it. "He regardeth not thee," they say, when in fact it was not the king so much that Daniel disregarded, as these wicked conspirators themselves. We see surely here the "fine Italian hand" of him who is, among his other titles, called "the accuser of our brethren." And doubtless this same Satan has a much more active part in much that tries the faith of saints to-day than most of them are aware of. And for this very reason they should give themselves the more to prayer while being tested in the fiery trial.

We need not follow Daniel further here. His God,

as we know, delivered him from the mouth of the lion "because he believed in his God." Paul, too, was so delivered, though in another sense, perhaps. (See 2 Tim.4:17). Did Satan, in his attempt to destroy Daniel before his time, foresee the revelations of the end-times made known through him, especially that relative to the Antichrist? And was Paul delivered out of the mouth of the lion that he might write to the Church those deep and rich revelations sent to the Ephesian and other assemblies from his Roman prison? We know not. That he was afterwards sacrificed by Cæsar's executioners, we know. Let us then have no fears for our own life, for our continuance here is sure until our work is done and our testimony for Christ completed.

Daniel at Prayer

(Chapter 9.)

GOD, by His servant Paul, linking prayer with prophecy, places prayer first in order (1 Cor. 11: 4). It is not a question of the comparative importance of the two, but one of *moral* order, or precedence. Prayer paves the way for prophesying, as it does for all effective ministry.

Thus, in the chapter before us, we see Daniel in earnest prayer and supplication, on which follow those revelations or prophecies which throw so much light on the "end times" which we now see to be at hand. God is sovereign in His choice of instruments, true; but He morally fits the instrument for the purpose He has in view; "Sanctified and meet for the Master's use," is the New Testament expression of this principle. So, while it is perfectly and always true that in the distribution of His gifts the Holy Spirit "divideth to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12: 11), it is equally true that for the exercise of these gifts He selects those who have been morally fitted for His service, by prayer and the diligent study of His word.

So with Daniel here: "I Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (ver. 2).

(Compare Jer. 25: 12 and 29: 10.) God might easily have revealed to Daniel directly, either in vision or by dreams, or by angelic ministry, that the long captivity of His people was drawing to its close; but this is not His way. It is on the principle of what has been called "the economy of miracle" that God usually acts: that is to say, He works miraculously only when necessary. When His saints or servants may learn His will by careful study of His Word and communion with Himself, they need not, nor should they expect, that He will make known to them His mind and ways by some shorter or easier method—as by suggestion, or vision, or dream. Daniel understood by the study of the writings of God's servants that the desolations of the beloved city of his fathers were about to end. And it is by a reverent respect for and diligent study of the Scriptures that His truth is made known to His people to-day, whether it be in reference to "things to come" or present guidance for the paths of our feet.

The *humility* of Daniel shines out in his act of making use of the books of his fellow-servants, as in a former paper we saw it so beautifully manifested in associating the companions of his exile with himself in the interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. (See comment on chapter 2: 23). Though classed as one of the "Major Prophets" for the vast scope of his prophecies, he availed himself of what his predecessors or contemporaries had written. It is but spiritual pride when any servant feels himself independent of or superior to the ministry of his fellows. Let us meekly confess that we know nothing in its fulness yet as we ought to know it, and therefore be willing and eager to

learn from any one qualified of God to help or instruct His people.

Daniel was no *fatalist*. Though he understood by books that the number of the years determined by God for the desolations of Jerusalem were about accomplished, he did not therefore exclude the use of means or human agency. He did not say, The thing is both foretold and fore-determined, and it is therefore certain to be accomplished; all we have to do is to wait and look for the fulfilment of the sure and certain word of God. No; Daniel did not falsely reason thus; he says, in verse 3, "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fastings, and sackcloth, and ashes." So will it ever be with those who hold soberly and thankfully to the truth of God's election and predestination. Instead of paralyzing the nerve of earnest effort, those blessed truths are rather to stimulate the spiritual energies, and in meekness and faith enable saints to pray and toil, in the assurance that their efforts will not be in vain; for God, who appointed the blessing has as certainly ordained the means by which they must be reached. So wrote Paul, chiefest of apostles and prince of missionaries: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2: 10).

"Prayer," "supplication," "fasting," "sackcloth," "ashes"—what a chain of links forged in the fires of discipline to bind the suppliant to the mercy-seat of God, and there wait upon Him till answer came through "the man Gabriel," sent to "fly swiftly" to inform the intercessor of God's gracious answer, not according to

the measure of his asking, but in keeping with God's ways of grace, "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think!" (Eph. 3: 20).

Thus Daniel is given to know and to reveal the times appointed even to the end—the days of Messiah, His rejection, the time of trouble following, and the glorious consummation.

"I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession," he says (ver. 4). *Confession* becomes us all, even the holiest and choicest of God's servants. "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments," he further confesses. *Sin, iniquity, wickedness, rebellion*—all these terms are used by him as if he would exhaust the catalogue in his desire to own their failure in full to God. "We," he says, not "They." He is as ready to line himself up with his people in their guilt, as he was to link his companions with himself in that which was to their credit, as in chapter two. This is morally very beautiful; though in himself a blameless man, his enemies themselves being judges, he in deepest lowliness of mind associates himself with his captive countrymen in the national guilt. He did not look upon their merited miseries with Pharisaic self-complacency, thanking God that he was not as others. No; nor like a former prophet did he accuse his people before God, supposing that he alone was left a witness to the one true God. (See 1 Kings 19: 10.)

It was from "God's word written" that His people had departed, he acknowledged in verse 5; in the verse following he confesses yet more; "Neither have we

hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land." They had refused the oral ministry of the prophets sent to speak to them in God's name, recalling them to obedience to His commandments, His precepts, and His judgments. They had added sin to sin, and he cries out in the distress of his penitent soul, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day," and so on to the end of verse 11.

Having made full confession of the national guilt, Daniel owns the justice of the evil that had come upon them, confirming the word which had been spoken against them. He entirely justifies God, and adds this yet to his confession, that they had not turned to Him in prayer for deliverance from their moral state, and that they might understand His truth (ver. 13). And is not this in large measure the reason why so few to-day understand God's truth—His Word? It seems to most as a sealed book passed from one to another, with the confession that it cannot be comprehended. (See Isa. 29: 11, 12.) But how could it be otherwise, since men, and Christian men at that, neglect to cry to God for light, or are unwilling to turn from their ways of worldliness, or break with their unholy associations? Here lies the real secret of failure in the mass of professing Christians to-day for lack of understanding of the Scriptures.

There is a hint given us of this principle in this same book of Daniel, chap. 12: 10: "None of the wicked shall understand." Not that all are really wicked who fail to understand the Scriptures, espe-

cially their prophetic portions; but just in proportion as Christians are in anything like the wicked, in that measure they are incapable of understanding the things written for our learning within the covers of that priceless heritage—the Bible. There is a moral condition required on the part of God's people to apprehend His mind, as Daniel more than hints here at the close of verse 13.

Confession having been made, and God's just judgment acknowledged in the punishment of His people, the prophet turns to the mercy and forgiving grace of God. It is one of the most touching appeals recorded in all the word of God (the high-priestly prayer of our Lord, in John 17, excepted). Daniel now breathes out the yearning of his heart for Jerusalem, God's holy mountain, and the down-trodden people called by His name. We must quote in full this precious portion:

“O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain. Because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken and do! Defer not,

for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."

Note that the self-forgetting prophet makes not one single request for himself personally; unselfishly he prays only for others; and even in his prayer for them he thinks not so much of their own blessing, or relief from oppression, or even their restoration to the land, but God's honor is uppermost in his thoughts. He makes mention of the city as "thy city," "thy holy mountain," "thy sanctuary that is desolate," and then, only, "the people that is called by thy name." And in summing up his exercises, he concludes with, "presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God."

Truly, it was the glory of the God of Israel that he sought above all things, and though he loved His people greatly, he desired their blessing as contributing to, or resulting in the honor of their God, the great Jehovah. And for this his prayer was quickly and blessedly answered, and a view of prophetic times given, that wonderful revelation, commonly called "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel," of which Christ is the central theme: for here, as everywhere in Scripture, "the testimony of (or, for) Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19: 10). And where this is not seen, the study of prophecy misses its true objective: for as the body without the soul is dead, so the teaching of what is called "Prophetic Truth" is also dead if Christ is not seen as the great object round whom all Scripture centres.

Here we leave our Daniel. He "rests, and shall stand in his lot at the end of the days" (chap. 12: 13).

We, though destined to enjoy a better portion, even the heavenly, shall yet see him when he rises with all "the dead in Christ" at "the resurrection of the just." We owe him a debt of deepest gratitude for the lessons of his life and words. Of the Lord he shall receive his just reward; and may we, encouraged by his holy example, stand firm for our Lord as he did; and together we shall enjoy the sunshine of His presence in that eternity that seems now so near at hand. Amen!

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