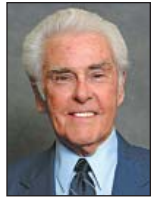


Act faithfully

The theme of faithfulness to God is central to the Book of Daniel. “Daniel 1:1-6:28 shows how in history Israelite heroes stood firm in their resolve to



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stay true to God and their heritage. In six different situations an Israelite hero faced extreme pressure to forsake God and tradition for personal safety and gain. In each case the hero resisted threats or danger of loss of life with no assurance of victory other than his faith” (Holman Bible Dictionary, p. 336).

In spite of his popularity as a political leader and God-inspired interpreter of visions and dreams, Daniel personally faced possible death in the fiery furnace (chapter three) and the den of lions (chapter six), at times with the other three exiles from Judah involved in the testing times.

Social pressure should not deter faithful worship and walk with God (6:6-10). Darius succeeded Belshazzar as king and is recognized in scripture as the most famous Mede of all. He was an astute leader and established three political entities with administrations responsible to him. Daniel was selected as one of the three administrators. He was so effective in his responsibilities that “Darius planned to set him over the whole kingdom.”

When the other leaders learned about this possibility, they began to look for ways to discredit Daniel but could not find anything illegal or unjust in his administration. They decided on a plan to condemn Daniel by having the King issue a decree “that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O King, shall be thrown into the lion’s den... so King Darius put the decree in writing.”

It had been Daniel’s practice to kneel before a window facing toward Jerusalem to pray, “giving thanks to his God.” Even after learning about the decree, Daniel continued his prayer vigil.

Faithfulness to God often results

in opposition (6:13-16). Daniel’s opposition came from the men who sought his death. These men reported to King Darius that Daniel still prayed three times daily to his Jewish God in disobedience to the king’s order. Darius was greatly disturbed and “was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.”

Then the group seeking Daniel’s death reminded the king of his own legal establishment of a code of law that could not be disobeyed. Under Darius, “a common code of laws was established in the empire, administered by royal judges” (Holman, p. 337). When ordered by the king, Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den at sundown. Darius made a striking comment to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”

Our contemporary society in much of the world puts extreme pressure on believers to recant their faith or be executed by religious extremists. Many are immediately killed if they will not renounce their faith.

Similar actions are taking place even in our own country, as the news media continually reports. This religious conflict does not mean death for faithfulness to God but seeks to control Christian expressions of faith in certain circumstances. Prayer to our Christian God may not be permitted since our military, medical and social gatherings often include persons of diverse religions or of no faith. Atheistic groups, the American Civil Liberties Union and others are opposed to Christian prayer in many circumstances while Christian forces are seeking to express their faith in their love for God.

God can use our faithfulness and integrity to point to him (6:19-23, 25-28). After a restless night, King Darius hurried to the entrance of the lions’ den and called out, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?” In his rejoicing over Daniel’s safe delivery, King Darius sent a message to peoples of all languages throughout the land that the God of Daniel was “the living God and he endures forever.”

Bible Studies for Life

November 22, 2015

Scripture: Daniel 6:6-10, 13-16, 19-23, 25-28

An outstanding example of faithfulness to God in our own recent history was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor, theologian and martyr. Son of a professor at the University of Berlin, at the age of 25 he became a lecturer in systematic theology at the same university.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, Bonhoeffer became a leading spokesman for the Confessing Church in Germany, which was the center of Protestant resistance to the Nazis. He later joined a group planning the overthrow of Hitler. The plot was discovered and he was arrested in April 1944. He was sent to Buchenwald Prison and later transferred to Schoenberg Prison.

On Sunday, April 8, 1945, he had just finished conducting a service of worship at Schoenberg when two soldiers came in saying, “Prisoner Bonhoeffer, make ready and come with us; the standard summons for being taken to a place of execution. As he left, he said to another prisoner, “This is the end — but for me, the beginning — of life.” He was hanged on the next day, less than a week before Allied soldiers reached the camp.

After his martyrdom, Bonhoeffer’s writings of faithfulness to God and integrity of faith have pointed thousands of people to God. The Cost of Discipleship continues to be widely read for Christian instruction in discipleship.

Daniel had to confront King Darius, and he lived to continue his faithfulness to God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer had to confront Adolph Hitler, and it led to his execution.

Such faith in the face of hatefulness and despair characterized his life just as it has for many other believers who gave their lives rather than renounce their faith.

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