**Daniel’s Life of Thanksgiving**

 October 10, 2021

Daniel 6:1-28

Key Verse 6:10 “Now when Daniel learned that a decree had been published, he went to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

Daniel chapter 6 is about the famous story of the prophet Daniel in the lion’s den. Daniel was an exile, a foreigner in Babylon. He served under many kings and experienced the change of kingdoms, and yet his faith did not change. Imagine a world where it is illegal to pray and if you are caught, you will be executed that day. What would you do? Daniel was in that situation. But Daniel thanked God. The penalty of death, he was willing to pay. In Canada it is still safe to pray. So, we need to give thanks to God for freedom today! In this Thanksgiving Sunday, let’s think about Daniel’s life of thanksgiving. He had a godly habit of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving was his lifestyle. It was thanksliving.

After conquering the great Babylonian Empire, King Darius divided his kingdom into 120 states and appointed 120 satraps as vassal kings, with three administrators over them. To the king’s eyes, Daniel was so distinguished among the administrators by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the other two administrators and the governors became jealous of Daniel. How could this foreigner be over us? They decided to destroy him. When they tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, they were unable to do so. These men tried to dig up Daniel’s past. They tried to find some past wrong doing, or mismanagement, abuse or affair or something or anything to bring a charge against him. But they could not find anything against him. Finally, they said, “We will never find any basis for charge against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”

Look at verses 6-9. They went as a group to the king and said, “The king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions’ den.” This decree greatly flattered the king’s ego and sense of pride. He could feel that his rule would be strengthened from this edict. He could also feel like he was even a god from this edict. There was nothing in this decree that King Darius did not like. So he said, “That sounds good to me. Let’s do it and put it in writing.” However, King Darius had no idea of the motivation behind this decree, that it was directly aimed at destroying Daniel. This time was a great trial and testing of Daniel’s faith and his obedience. Should he obey the decree or obey God?

Look at verse 10. “Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as had done before.” When he thought about this decree, he might have reasoned that for 30 days he could miss his prayer time. After all, there is nothing in the Old Testament that says that one should pray to God everyday. But this human reasoning would only weaken his faith. How could he not pray to God? He believed God and had faith in God. By not praying to God it would be as if he were denying God. Daniel who believed that God was the living God, could not do this. He could not in his heart let in any compromise. How could he face God if he compromised even this one time? It would be better to face the hungry lions than to stand before God on the day of judgment.

Yet, when Daniel thought of this edict, he probably trembled thinking about having to face the big mouths of hungry lions who would eat him alive. He was a human being like us. It was a terrible thought to Daniel. In this time of crisis Daniel knew that the only way out was to go to God in prayer. The only way for certain victory was through prayer. Also it is noteworthy that Daniel’s prayer is summarized as, “giving thanks to his God.” Much of his prayer consisted of thanksgiving to God. Verse 10b says, “he prayed ‘just as he had done before.’” It is clear that day after day it was Daniel’s habit to give thanks to God. But Daniel gave thanks to God even when he knew it could cost him his life. Nothing was going to stop him from giving thanks to God. If you were in such a situation, what would be your reaction? I can imagine us questioning God. I can imagine that some people’s reaction would be that of complaining and discouragement. But how many of us would be like Daniel in getting down on our knees and giving thanks to God? Daniel’s example teaches us that we are to give thanks even in times of difficulty. In Philippians 4:6, the apostle Paul says that we are to give thanks even when times are tough. He wrote, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” When the normal thing to do is to worry, we are to bring our cares to God, put worry and insecurity away from us and thank God. Even when things are going very bad for you—you are to give thanks.

Thanksgiving is to be so integral to our lives. In everything we do we are to give thanks. Colossians 3:17 says, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” We are to give thanks to God in all our activities. This shows us that giving thanks to God is to be integral not only to our prayers—but also to our lives. It is to be our constant attitude. It should be our lifestyle. We need to move from thanksgiving to thanksliving. The whole psalm is filled with thankfulness to God. It is repeated again and again, “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever.” If only we had this attitude! If only it would take the place of our complaining, moaning and discontentment. How different we would be! Why should we thank God in every situation, even in things that are difficult and painful? We can think of 3 reasons.

The first reason why we should thank God, even when we are in danger and suffering, is because we are children of the King and even in suffering it is a privilege to serve Him and to do His will. God is treating us as real sons and daughters. Daniel knew that he was on earth to serve God. He was going to stand up for what was right even if it cost him his life. Daniel was proud to serve God even if he was going to suffer for it. Giving thanks to God was not something that was dispensable. Daniel was going to give God thanks even if it was going to cost him his life. He considered it the greatest privilege to serve the living God. He knew God’s will was perfect. Whatever God’s will for him was he was going to take that cup and give God thanks for it.

We are also taught this by the example of our Lord Jesus. Jesus, on the night before he was crucified, took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take it; this is my body.’ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,’ he said to them.” (Mark 14:22–24) Isn’t that incredible? Jesus, in instituting the Lord’s Supper, gave thanks for the very things that were the symbols of His suffering and death. When He took the bread He gave thanks and then broke it. That represented His broken body. When He took the cup in His hands, which represented His shed blood, He gave thanks for it. How could He give thanks for the very things that were the symbol of His suffering and death? Yet that’s what He did.

The second reason why we should always give thanks to God even when things are difficult is due to the fact that everything is working out for good. Daniel knew this. He had seen it before. In chapter 2 King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and he wanted the dream interpreted. But he wouldn’t tell anyone what the dream was. If the king told them the dream, the wise men such as the magicians could interpret it very well based on their experience and flattering language. The king wanted to know whether their interpretations were true. When no one could tell him what the dream was, he was going to kill all the wise men of Babylon, including Daniel. But Daniel asked the king for some time and he got his friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to pray with him. Then God revealed the dream to Daniel. So instead of being killed, he was placed in a high position and lavished with many gifts. King Nebuchadnezzar made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. (Daniel 2:48)

The same thing happened in chapter 3. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were threatened with death if they did not worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar set up. They didn’t worship it. They were thrown into the fiery furnace. But God rescued them and Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged that their God is the living God. He also promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to higher positions. God worked things out for His glory. In this passage God also worked out things for good. Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den. But God sent an angel and closed the mouths of the lions. Daniel was saved and then those that conspired against him were killed. King Darius learned that Daniel’s God was the true living God. God controls all things. Nothing can thwart His plans to glorify His Son and save His people. We can thank God in even the most dangerous situation because “in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Thirdly, and most importantly, we should give thanks to God always because He is intrinsically worthy. We see this in Psalm 7:17 where David said, “I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.” God is so wonderful, so glorious, so good—that we are to thank Him for being like that. There is no one like Him. His being and attributes always call out for praise and thanks. The Psalm ends with, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” You should thank and praise Him even if it appears that there will be no benefit to you, simply because you have breath. He is intrinsically worthy of praise and thanks.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 says, “Pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” In the time of crisis, Daniel did not compromise. He did not panic and lose control and give into his emotions. He did not try to do something humanly to relieve the stress like drinking or sleeping a lot or taking drugs. He remained faithful to God and believed that God would answer his prayers. Especially, he gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before. It is easy to give thanks to God when we are sailing along in our lives of faith and everything is smooth and pleasant. But when the crisis hits, when the trials come and the storms of life are over us, we quickly lose thankfulness and become angry at God and angry at others. We become full of complaints and filled with bitter and revengeful desires. Daniel did not fight the physical fight and he did not struggle with people such as his political enemies. Instead he went on his knees to God and fought the spiritual fight through prayer. Our real faith is shown when we are in times of crisis and trials. We can say that faith is to remain constant and be faithful always in small things such as prayer. Faith does not require us to do extraordinary things.

When his political rivals found Daniel praying and asking God for help at his house, they quickly reported to the king, and had Daniel thrown to the lion’s den. When King Darius heard this, he realized that he made a big mistake for signing the law. He was greatly distressed but he gave in. However, he said, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!” It is remarkable that this pagan king would encourage Daniel like that. It is beautiful to see how even unbelievers will sometimes pick up on the faith and morals of faithful believers whom they observe at close hand. Only too often Christians fail their unsaved friends and relatives by not having as high standards of faith and practice as the world expects from God’s people.

When Daniel trusted God, God saved him. Look at verse 23. “The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.” Sometimes in our life we face many lions. At work, our boss can appear to be a lion or our coworkers at work can appear to be like lions. They want to eat us up and devour us and crush us. We want to avoid them and are afraid to face them. Sometimes our teachers can appear to be like lions, too. But we learn here how to overcome the lions. We must trust in God by praying like Daniel and giving thanks. Then God will deliver us when we pray with faith like Daniel. We should not think or say, “I don’t have Daniel’s faith!!” Just remember, the same God we pray to is the same God that rescued Daniel. Is your situation any worse than Daniel’s? God will rescue you and make you strong when you spend time in prayer. Remember, the victory is not with men nor from us. The victory comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Psalm 34:19 says, “a righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.”

May God make each of us very prayerful so that we may trust in God like Daniel. May God use our crisis and trials as an opportunity for us to come closer to him and pray more to him. May God be glorified through our prayer life. May God help us form a godly habit of thanksgiving every day. Thanksgiving should be our lifestyle. Our life should be thanksliving.

Big Idea: Move from thanksgiving to thanksliving