

# My Favorite Thing About

## DANIEL

Daniel 3:16-18

July 24, 2021

We have now arrived at the Book of **DANIEL**. I love this book. I love that God gave Nebuchadnezzar a glimpse of the future {Ch 2} and I love the passion with which God pursued him {Ch 4}. I love that God told Daniel he was well loved in heaven {9:23; 10:11, 19}. And yes, I love the prophecies because they remind me that God is ultimately in control and therefore, I have nothing to fear.

I love all those things about Daniel, but they are not **My Favorite Thing**. What is? **Loyalty to God no matter the cost.**

### Daniel 1:

Time and again God sent prophets to warn the people of Israel of the consequences of their infidelity. Yet, as we've noted, they refused to listen and experienced the consequences of their choices. After the Battle at Carchemish in **605 BC** – Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. As a result, King Jehoiakim began to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, which included the young nobility of Judah being taken to Babylon. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were a part of that group.

These 4 boys were chosen to attend the king's university and were "**honored**" with new names and were provided food and drink from the king's table. The intent behind this was to absorb them into the culture of Babylon and transfer their loyalty from Judah to Nebuchadnezzar. **To accept the rich foods from the king's table would be an acknowledgment that he was provider and sustainer and evidence of the transfer of loyalty.**

That worked for 99.9% of all captives, but these 4 had a different definition of Loyalty.

Although they were good Jews, their loyalty didn't rest on nation or religion. You see, blind loyalty to nation can lead to the marginalizing and persecution of "**outsiders**" and blind loyalty to religion can lead to Crusades and Inquisitions. Yes, they were good Jews, but the focus of their loyalty rested on **ONE** greater than nation or religion. They were loyal to God and that sort of loyalty leads to love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control {Galatians 5:22-23} and that makes all the difference.

Under no circumstance could these 4 give their loyalty to anyone but God. Faithfulness/Loyalty are not Faithfulness/Loyalty if they are only practiced when times are good, and so.... they politely "**rebelled**" asking to be allowed to eat only fruits, vegetables, and grains and drink only water. They knew that refusing to eat from the king's table would be misunderstood and that the consequences might be significant, but to compromise was unthinkable.

It was touch and go, but finally, they were allowed to eat as they wished and they did so throughout their university years. At the final exam.....

- **Daniel 1:20** - And as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* conjurers who *were* in all his realm.

### Daniel 3:

Daniel had said that Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would not last --- the head of gold would be replaced with a chest of silver. For some period of time the king was in awe of this prophecy, but eventually his arrogance got the better of him and a statue made entirely of gold was just the ticket to prove Daniel **AND** God wrong. Every important official from every corner of the vast empire **ATTENDED** and **INTENDED** to bow down to the immense statue of gold.

- **Daniel 3:4-6** - Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: <sup>5</sup> As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

So, the bleachers were full, the musicians at the ready and the furnaces hot – just in case.

The sound of music drifted over the crowd and everyone hit the ground – except for 3.

The King had in his employ men who were jealous of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego and here was the perfect opportunity to be rid of them. These advisors drew Nebuchadnezzar's attention to the fact that these Jewish boys were not bowing down.

- **Daniel 3:9-12** - .... "O king, live forever! <sup>10</sup> You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, <sup>11</sup> and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. <sup>12</sup> But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon-- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego-- who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up."

The king must have thought highly of these 3 young men because He gave them a second chance:

- **Daniel 3:15** - "Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you will not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

The great golden statue stood neglected as every ear strained to hear their response.

They didn't need time to think it over. Their loyalty to God could not be threatened or coerced or manipulated. It didn't exist only when times were good and things were going their way, No!! It was constant, fierce and unshakable:

- **Daniel 3:16-18** - 'your majesty, we have no need to answer you on this matter. If there is a god who is able to save us from the blazing furnace, it is our **GOD** whom we serve and He will deliver us from your majesty's power.... then they added, **BUT IF NOT**, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up.

**AND**.... Into the furnace they went

**THEN**.... Out of the furnace they walked.

Humbled, Nebuchadnezzar declared,

- **Daniel 3:28** - ..."Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God.

## Daniel 6:

By the time we arrive at **Ch. 6**, Daniel was an old man. He had remained faithful and loyal to God throughout his long life. His loyalty was so well known that the king of the conquering nation of Medo-Persia, put him in a position of great authority, much to the irritation of the other advisors.

It didn't take long before these advisors devised a plan to get rid of Daniel. As a matter of fact, they were counting on Daniel's loyalty to God to assist them in their plan, *"because they could find no fault in him"* – **Daniel 6:4**.

**AND**

They were counting on Darius to be a bit full of himself, as most monarchs are. They would use his pride to their advantage and bring an end to Daniel.

SO.... they went before Darius and suggested that a new law be written stating, *"anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den"* {**Daniel 6:7**}. As predicted, Darius liked the sound of that and the law went on the books.

Daniel, knowing this new law was directed at him, went home, promptly opened his windows facing Jerusalem and prayed to God for all the world to see. He knew what the consequences would be, but he deliberately defied the law and let God deal with the consequences.

The advisors could hardly contain their glee as they pranced into the throne room to report Daniel's disobedience. Immediately Darius saw what his pride had caused, but it was too late. The law was the law and could not be undone. Darius tried desperately to find a way out for Daniel, but there wasn't one, so off to the lion's den Daniel went – calm and unafraid.

- **Daniel 6:16** - Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you."

The king was so upset he spent the night fasting and early in the morning he rushed to the lion's den:

- **Daniel 6:20-27** - And when he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?" <sup>21</sup> Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup> "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also

toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."...<sup>25</sup> Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound! <sup>26</sup> "I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion *will be* forever. <sup>27</sup> "He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, Who has *also* delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

*"Of course,"* you might be thinking, *"It's easy to remain Faithful/Loyal when everything works out."* We have an advantage because we get to read the end of the story, but they lived it, so what we have to do is step back from the mirror and look at these events through their eyes.

They didn't know if they would be granted the freedom to eat as they chose. They could just as easily have been thrown into the dungeon or worse. They were loyal to God not knowing what the outcome would be.

The furnace and the lion's den take their loyalty to the next level....

Those 3 boys **KNEW** what awaited them if they refused to bow. They refused to bow anyway.

Daniel **KNEW** when he opened his windows, he'd get a first-person experience with hungry lions. He opened the windows anyway.

God choosing to save them or not save them was not at issue - remaining Faithful/Loyal to Him, **NO MATTER THE COST**, was.

- **Hebrews 11:32-40** - And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, <sup>33</sup> who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. <sup>35</sup> Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated -- <sup>38</sup> the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. <sup>39</sup> These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. <sup>40</sup> God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Jesus told us, that before committing to Him, it was important to count the cost, because choosing Him would mean the real possibility of losing everything this world says is important. But, more important still, it would mean a cross with your name on it. So He said, count the cost first. Decide first if loyalty to Me will be worth it to you in the end **{Mark 8:34-38; Luke 14:26-33}**.

- **Philippians 3:7-8** - But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

**Being a Christ Follower is serious business. It is not for the faint of heart. It is not for fair-weather types. It is not for those who expect reward or position or popularity. It is for those who have weighed the earthly consequences and decided that they would not have it any other way. It is for those who have decided that in Jesus they have found everything, no matter what it costs them.**

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah counted the cost and decided Jesus was worth it.

That's why Loyalty, no matter the cost, is **My Favorite Thing About Daniel**.