

## The Hand of Our God Is Upon Us

*"His windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees 3 times a day, and gave thanks before his God, as aforetime"—Dan. 6:10*

DAN. 3 is an inspiring record of men who chose the narrow way and who were prepared to follow it wherever it led—men who went forward from strength to strength, building for the future with purpose and determination upon a firm basis of light and reality.

Nebuchadnezzar, the personification of human pride and power, sets up an image of gold that all are commanded to worship. All through history it has been the same image in various forms, and it is the same today.

**It is the image of man—60 cubits high and 6 wide. 6 is the number of man and the measure of his dominion on earth.**

And, from time to time, man has demanded that the children of God worship his image. In early Christian times, all that was required to secure a believer's release from death was to throw a little incense into the sacred fires of Jupiter. A small, harmless concession, it might seem, easy to do with mental reservations, but **the whole vital principal of allegiance to God or man was involved.**

We are repeatedly faced with the same subtle and fatal choice in many ways today.

Daniel himself does not appear at this crisis, when his 3 companions are cast into the furnace. Apparently he was elsewhere.

But 70 years later he was faced with the same issue, and in a far more subtle form. This is recorded in ch. 6, and occurred under the Persian king Darius. This time no open act at all was demanded. All that was required was a refraining from prayer to any but the king for 30 days. And so (v. 10)—

"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 3 times a day, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

He knew the penalty. Was he foolhardy? Why couldn't he have taken care not to be seen? Why couldn't he have closed the lattice window which is so pointedly mentioned as being open? Wouldn't common prudence have demanded at least that? God could hear just as well with it shut.

But why **SHOULD** he hide? Why should he be ashamed or afraid? Who has supreme power, God or man? Naaman the Syrian said (2 Kings 5:18)—

"When I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant this thing."

But Daniel was a man of different stamp. Why should he temporize and interrupt his communion with God at the whim of a heathen monarch? It was; no sin to pray, it was his duty. And if he intended to pray, why should he hide it?

He could not have faithfully followed any other course. His allegiance to God was on trial, and he faced the issue squarely.

He did not go out of his way to flout the king's commandment. He merely ignored it, and followed his usual custom of worship, scorning subterfuge.

Our minds are turned to an action of somewhat similar nature on the part of Ezra—an action which to the eyes of cold common sense was foolhardy and rash, but which was well-pleasing to God (Ezra 8:21-23)—

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

"For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king saying,

"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him, but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him.

"So we fasted and besought our God for this: and He was entreated of us."

Ezra was not overconfident or boastful. He did not presume upon the providence of God. But he did not feel he could consistently ask the help of man when he had spoken of the limitless power of his God. Others may have regarded the matter differently, but to him, the situation raised again the same issue of allegiance and dependence—God or man—and whenever that issue arises in whatever form, the answer of faith must be the same.

He well realized the responsibility he had assumed in leading his unprotected company through wild and hostile country. It is clear that this weighed heavily upon him. There were many other lives besides his own involved—many who trusted him and depended upon him, and who were prepared to make the journey with him relying on his judgment and wisdom.

It would have been far easier to have asked for an armed guard, but he felt that the honor of his God was at stake, and so in prayerful hope, and with no armor but faith, they ventured forth.

And no harm befell them.

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These examples of individual courage and faith shine forth during some of Israel's darkest years: Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, his 3 companions, Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. Out of the deep shadow of the captivity period, these names appear as scattered beacons of faithful endurance.

For the most part, these men worked out their course alone, surrounded by bitter hostility. The support and comfort of companionship was denied them.

Daniel's intense devotion to the land and people of God is evident from his prolonged prayers on their behalf, yet in the inscrutable wisdom of God it was decreed that he should endure a long and weary lifetime in exile, with Jerusalem desolate, the sanctuary in ruins, and the people of God a derision and reproach.

And to Ezra and Nehemiah fell the thankless task of welding a few forlorn and factious remnants into a surface semblance of national unity, while the enemy derided the pitifully small results and those who remembered the former things wept at the comparison.

Discouragement at times must have assailed these men at the hopelessness of their task in their "day of small things," but a broader view of their position would carry them on.

At all times, the issue is an individual one, and the personal relation to God is the important factor. This does not change, though outward circumstances may vary greatly, and therefore true satisfaction and confidence lies not in our material circumstances or visible accomplishments, but in our proper adjustment to them according to the expressed wisdom of God.

Though destined to live during times of national collapse and humiliation, this conviction of the passing and secondary nature of present things would provide all these men alike with a basic consolation. Truly they grieved sincerely over the unhappy state of affairs, and labored heroically to alleviate it, but they realized that behind all temporary and surface calamities the eternal purpose was moving forward, unaffected by the failures of men.

This did not, of course, relieve them from doing their part in their day and generation, but it softened the bitterness & despondency that external conditions would generate.

In their day, their heaven and earth were being shaken. Things which had appeared stable were collapsing. And with the collapse of the external things went the collapse of the faith of many.

It was a time for determining what things were passing and incidental, and what things were fixed and eternal. Those whose faith had related to temporal prosperity and safety in the land were cast adrift. Only those held firm who saw deeper, and realized that faith in God means more than

merely expecting His favor and protection, and must carry through times of darkness as well as times of light.

Of such was Daniel. Beholding his people's misery, his faith was not shaken in the power of the God Who had chosen them, but he looked to the spiritual condition of the people for the answer to their woes.

So with Jeremiah and Ezekiel. While others lamented God's departure from them, these men proclaimed the real cause, and the only remedy. We, too, live in times of upheaval—

“Once again I shake both the heaven and the earth . . . that those things that cannot be shaken may remain”

(Heb. 12:26-27).

Whether we are shaken away or whether we remain depends upon the things to which we cling; If we cling to the things that cannot be shaken, then we can say with David”—

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. The Lord of Hosts is with us.

"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Psalm 46).

—G.V.G.

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