

GOD'S SUPER HEROES – DANIEL part two

Fighting God's battles-God's superheroes (Daniel) Part 6

The Bible is the source book of living. It tells us how the Creator has designed his creation to live by giving his laws and principles that cover every area of our life. But God has graciously done something else. He has given us examples of men and women who lived by his word and were blessed. These were not superhuman people who came from a different planet. They were people just like us, people who had problems and weaknesses and yet found God to be sufficient in spite of their weaknesses. We have been privileged over the last few weeks to study the lives of a few of these men. We have seen Gideon, Moses, Elijah, and today we're going to have a second look at Daniel. Daniel is one of the greatest figures of the Old Testament. In fact, Daniel and Joseph are the only characters in scripture of whom nothing bad is said. David was a great man, but he had some issues with another man's wife. Moses was a great man, but he struck the rock instead of speaking to it. Abraham was a great man, but he lied about his wife being his sister. Elijah was a great man, but he became depressed and asked God to die, and the list goes on. But when you come to Daniel, you have no bad comments made about his life. That does not mean he was perfect, but it does mean he was a very godly man that we can learn from. What made Daniel such a great man?

1. Daniel was a great man because he lived his life by God's wisdom

We all need wisdom. Someone has said that knowledge is the ability to take things apart, while wisdom is the ability to put them together. The world around us is constantly tearing things apart in our lives, and God alone has the wisdom to be able to put those things back together. We always need wisdom, but there are times in our lives when we especially need to hear a word from the lord. Daniel chapter 2 records one of those times for Daniel.

Daniel 2:1-3, "In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means. "

When these men came in before the king, they did what would be natural for any of us to do. They asked the king to tell them what he had dreamed so that they could interpret it. The king, however, demanded that they not only tell him the interpretation of the dream,

but that they also tell him what it was that he had dreamed. When they failed to be able to do the impossible, he gave the order for all the wise men in the kingdom to be killed. When the king's guard went out to kill the wise men, Daniel went to the king and asked for time so that he could interpret the dream, and then he asked his friends to pray for him.

Daniel 2:19-20, "During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said: "Praise be to the name of God forever and ever; wisdom and power are his."

The dream concerned the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar and the kingdoms that would follow in the years to come. Daniel then revealed to the king both what he had dreamed and what the dream meant.

Daniel 2:47, "The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

Life brings with it many mysteries. There are many questions that we need answers to. The good news is that the same God who revealed the king's dream to Daniel is willing to give you direction and wisdom for your life.

James 1: 5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

It is usual for me to struggle every week when I try to prepare my sermon. I work and work, and nothing is coming together. And then, God seems to make a point. When it all looks hopeless, the day is over, and I'm so tired I can hardly think, God begins to flood my mind with sermon material. Verse 5 tells us that God wants to give us wisdom. He wants to generously give, and He won't find fault when you come to Him. He's not going to say, "You again! When are you going to get it together?" God says, "I'm ready and waiting to give you wisdom.

Our problem is that we often have a wrong view of God. We often see God as someone who is distant. Or maybe we have a performance mentality that tells us we have to live up to certain expectations in order for God to give us wisdom. Or we may be in the "let's make a deal" mindset. "God, if you'll tell me what I want to know, then I will do these things for you." The truth is that God loves you and wants to reveal His truth to you. He is your father, and he wants to guide you.

Wisdom comes as we deepen our relationship with God. Chuck Swindoll said, "What comes from the lord because it is impossible for humans to manufacture it? Wisdom. What comes from humans because it is impossible for the lord to experience it? Worry. What is it that brings wisdom in dispels worry? Worship

2. Daniel was a great man because he had courageous convictions

The real test of courage is not limited to the battlefield. The real tests of courage are much deeper and much quieter. They're inner tests, like remaining faithful when nobody is looking and standing alone when you're misunderstood.

We see two major tests of Daniel's integrity.

TEST #1-THE ISSUE OVER DEFILED FOOD

We saw last week that Daniel was taken away from his homeland and deported into Babylon when he was only a teenager. That's like moving someone away from a small country store and moving them into the heart of New York City. Everything was new and exciting, and it would have been very easy for Daniel to say, "when in Babylon, do as the Babylonians do." Part of the brain washing process to turn these young Jewish men into Babylonians was that they would eat from the king's table. Daniel purposed in his heart not to do so because the food was against God's dietary laws, and it was given in honor of the Babylonian gods. Daniel was a young man who had a hard decision to make, and he made it. That decision set a precedent for the rest of Daniel's life. As a teenager, he would not compromise God's law, and he had that uncompromising kind of mindset for the rest of his life.

TEST#2-THE ISSUE OVER PRAYER

Probably the most well known and most remembered story of Daniel's uncompromising life was that of the lions' den found in Daniel chapter 6. You could not go to the video store and rent a movie that would have any more drama in it than this story. It is a story of Daniel's courage and conviction. A new king had arisen on the throne, Darius the Mede, and he was looking for a few men he could trust his entire kingdom to.

Daniel 6:1-5, "It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

The king chose 120 satraps to rule, with 3 presidents over them all, and he was in the process of choosing Daniel to be one of those 3 presidents. The other men who were not chosen were jealous of him, and they devised a plan to have him killed. They went together in a group to the king and asked him to make a law that no one would pray to anyone except the king for 30 days. The king agreed and put it in writing.

It was decision time again for Daniel. He had passed the test when he was a teenager, and now as an older man (80 or 90 years old), he is once again confronted with a life or death decision. He can either please God and be executed, or he can please man and continue to live. So what did Daniel do when he heard about the new law? He went home, opened his windows and prayed three times a day just as he always had. When his enemies saw what he was doing, they were quick to tell the king. The nature of the law of the Medes and Persians was that it could not be changed or compromised in any way after it was made. That meant the king had no choice. He wanted to save Daniel, but he could not break his own law. Daniel was taken and thrown into the lions' den and left overnight to be devoured by the hungry beasts. The next morning, the king came early to see what had happened to Daniel and to his amazement, he found Daniel doing fine because an angel of the lord had protected him against becoming a Daniel Burger.

Daniel 6:23 says, " And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God."

The king then took those who had accused Daniel, and they were thrown into the lions' den along with their families. We don't know how many lions there were, but there must have been an awful lot because when Daniel's enemies were thrown in the den with their families, they were devoured before they even hit the ground.

This is a story of a man who had true conviction about what he believed about his God, and it is a message that we desperately need in our society today. We live in a day of compromise where very few people have strong convictions of any kind. That is one of the reasons our society is falling apart.

Truth about convictions

1. Beliefs are often borrowed. A conviction is always your own.

As parents, we do everything we can to teach God's word to our children. The truth is, however, that in the beginning what we teach them is our conviction, not their own. That's why there is often a struggle with our children at a certain age when they begin to ask hard questions about what we have taught them. As a parent, to have your child question the truth that you have always taught him is a scary thing. We are so afraid they will cease to believe what we have taught them. The truth is that many times the questioning process is essential if what we believe is to become truly their own. When

you work these things through in your mind, the truth becomes your own. And you don't have to be a child to go through that process. Some Christians go through a time of questioning in their twenties, some in their thirties or even later. Such people like Lee Strobel went through a long time of researching the scripture with the end result of becoming a rock of the faith. I can put it this way, "Beliefs come easy. Convictions must be purposely chosen."

2. Your beliefs are what you talk about. Your convictions are what you're willing to die for.

Adrian Rogers once said: "Faith is not believing God in spite of the evidence. Faith is obeying God in spite of the consequences."

Daniel was a man who not only talked about what he believed, he proved what he believed by being willing to lose his life for it. Many years ago, I heard a man named Richard Wurmbrand speak. Over 4,000 priests, pastors, and ministers from all denominations gathered in the Soviet Union and elected Joseph Stalin as their honorary president. One by one these people went to the podium and declared that Christianity and communism were fundamentally the same. They could "get along."

Pastor Wurmbrand went to the podium and spoke of loyalty only to Jesus Christ. He said Christianity could not "co-exist" with any entity that opposed the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus. As a result, Wurmbrand spent years in Communist jails, being beaten and abused. What he did was the product of his conviction.

One of the reasons we know the resurrection of Christ is true is the fact that his followers were willing to die for it. People may preach anything, but they won't die for just anything. They laid down their lives because they were thoroughly convinced that Jesus Christ had indeed come back from the dead. That was their conviction.

3. There is sometimes a difference between the convictions of Christians and Biblical convictions.

Much of the so called convictions that many believers have today don't have anything to do with the bible. They are someone's application of scripture rather than what the scriptures plainly say. For example, I have known Christians who said they had a conviction against playing video games. I've known Christians who would not go to the movies, would not own a television, would not buy gasoline on Sunday, and the list goes on and on and on. Those are convictions of Christians. They are not Biblical convictions. A Biblical conviction is plain enough and clear enough that there is no question about its accuracy. For example, Biblical convictions tell me that Jesus Christ is

the son of God, that he died for my sins and that he is coming again. Biblical conviction tells me that he is the only way to heaven.

4. Beliefs can be a burden. True convictions bring joy to the heart.

Caring around someone else's conviction and tried to stand for it can be like carrying so much heavy baggage around with you. You don't want to set it down because you don't think you should lose it, but at the same time you're not overjoyed with carrying it. True conviction, on the other hand, brings joy to your heart because you know that God is true. A good example of that is found in the book of acts. The apostles had been testifying to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and as a result they were persecuted. Acts 5 tells us that the ruling body of the Jews had them flogged. To be flogged would be to beat beaten with whips that often contained glass or rocks. They literally had their backs ripped apart. And how did they respond to this unbelievable torture?

Acts 5:41-42, The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ

Their rejoicing was the result of their conviction. They did not simply believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, they knew he was raised from the dead. That was their conviction, and true conviction brings joy.

Help to develop Biblical convictions

1. Have Biblical role models

God made us in such a way that we learn by watching others. That's why Paul could say to the Philippian believers in

Philippians 4:6, "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

Do you have someone in your life that you can watch and learn from? Do you have someone who will answer your deepest questions about the Christian life and share from his life experience? We all need people like that.

2. Saturate yourself with a Biblical instruction .

Our lives are lived in a sea of secularism. There's not a day that passes that we're not bombarded with this world's philosophies. Those of worldly philosophies and ideas seek to bind us in darkness. That's where the scripture comes in.

Psalm 119:130, " The unfolding of your words gives light; and it gives understanding to the simple."

If you really want to have strong convictions, stay in God's word. Conviction comes when God takes his written word and applies it to your heart and your situation.

3. Avoid those things which would weaken your convictions

Having Godly role models and careful instruction will not change your life if you have barriers blocking them. It's like God wants to X-Ray your heart, but you have a protective shield that will not allow him to do so. Your barrier may be someone that you hang out with. It could be the television or movies that you watch or the books that you read. You must determine what the barriers or that are keeping you from growing in your convictions.

In every generation, god raises up people who will stand for him and live righteously lives. Those people are the salt of the earth, and they're greatly needed. Are you willing to do what it takes to be a person of strong Biblical conviction?

3. Daniel was a great man because he persevered

From the time he was deported into Babylon as a teenager to the time when he was well advanced in years, Daniel just kept on keeping on for the lord. With the Apostle Paul he could've said

2 Tim 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

What a legacy to leave for those who come behind us!