

# **STUDIES IN DANIEL**

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- 1. AN OVERWHELMING MINORITY. Based on Dan. 1:1-16**

Larry Love, an associate of Billy Graham, saw an unusual and striking piece of advertising in a London railway station. It pictured a copy of a very exclusive and expensive magazine. Beneath the picture were the words, "Read by an overwhelming minority." It is

**a catchy and clever idea that is so often true. History is so often most exciting just at those points when the action is in the hands of the overwhelming minority. The majority rules in the business meetings of men, but in God's business it is often the overwhelming minority that rules.**

**Noah was practically alone in his stand for righteousness and his labor for God, but he was an overwhelming minority who won the day. Joseph was alone against his brothers who easily overwhelmed him and sold him into slavery, but it was he who came out on top in the end. Gideon had only a drop in the bucket force compared to the Midianites, but with his overwhelming minority he put them to flight and gained the victory. Elijah was an obvious minority when he withstood hundreds of the prophets of Baal, but it was his prayer that was heard, and fire fell from heaven to give him the victory. It is a popular saying that one man and God are a majority. The meaning is true, but technically they are still only 2. It is more accurate to say that one man and God are an overwhelming minority.**

**Emerson said, "All history is a record of the power of minorities and of minorities of one." The whole history of the church is in this category. Luther did not face his inquisitors with arms outstretched pointing to the army beside him saying, "Here we stand." He stood solitary and alone and said, "Here I stand. I can do no other-God help me." God did help him and he became an overwhelming minority.**

**Dorothy Dix was a 33-year-old school teacher in Cambridge, Mass. when she became aware of the terrible conditions under which the insane had to live. She decided to do something about it even though the majority were indifferent and thought of them as beasts. She was strongly opposed by those who profited from human misery. She gathered data on the conditions and presented it**

**to the state legislature. It shocked them into action. She kept it up all across the country, and she saw more than 110 mental institutions built before she died at age 87. After 33 years of being among the complacent majority she spent 54 years as an overwhelming minority.**

**Helen Keller, the blind and deaf girl who became a world traveler, was asked by Queen Victoria of England, "How do you explain the fact that even though you were both blind and deaf you were able to accomplish so much?" Without hesitation she replied, "Had it not been for Anne Sullivan the name of Helen Keller would be unknown. Anne gave of her life to teach Helen and develop her skills and personality. One person who cared enough changed her life, and then her life changed that of millions. One who cares enough can do what millions of the uncaring can never do. There is tremendous power in being an overwhelming minority.**

**Carnegie free libraries are over the United States giving every person in our society the opportunity to read and learn. This did not happen because of some great movement of the masses. It all started with Major Anderson of the Revolutionary War fame. He owned a library when few did, and he was not selfish with it. He opened it up for young boys who wanted to use it. Every Saturday morning the young Scottish lad Andrew Carnegie came and spent the day reading in his library. He went on to become one of the richest men in America. He was ever grateful for one man whose generosity opened up new worlds to him. He gave millions to make this possible for others by setting up free libraries all across the country. Multiplied millions have been blessed and enriched because of one man who shared his resources. Great things seldom start with crowds. They start with one person, or a few persons doing what is wise and right.**

**In 1619 the Virginia House of Burgesses met. It was the first**

legislative body in America. 22 men had been elected. As soon as they met they were interrupted by 6 Polish men who were respected in the colony for their craft in making pitch and tar. Being Poles they had been denied the right to vote. Only Anglo-Saxons, or those of English heritage, were granted this right. There was a dispute and the Polish workmen were granted the right to vote. This minority group won that right for the millions of Poles who would come to America. William Jennings Bryan was right when he said, "The humblest citizen of all the land, when clad in the armor of a righteous cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error."

Not all minorities, of course, are overwhelming, and not all who are, are so in a good sense. There have been victories of evil minorities also, and many good minorities struggle just to survive, and others are crushed by the majority. The fact is, however, that God's greatest instrument in the past has been the overwhelming minority. This ought to challenge believers today to recognize that they are a minority group that God can use to have an impact on our secular society. It is an obligation to try whether we succeed or not. Our attitude is to be that of the poet who wrote-

"You say the little efforts that I make will do no good.  
They never will prevail to tip the hovering scale  
When justice hangs in the balance.  
I don't think I ever thought they would,  
But I am prejudice beyond debate  
In favor of my right to choose which side  
Shall feel the stubborn ounces of my weight."

We are not responsible for success, but we are fully responsible as to where we put our weight. We are responsible to be loyal to God and His Word no matter how futile such loyalty seems to be in the face of majority opposition. We want to look at the life of one of the most loyal of all overwhelming minorities of history in the hope

**that a consideration of his stand might challenge us to dare to be a Daniel in our day.**

**Clarence Macartney, the great biographical preacher, said, "Daniel may be described as the most influential man of the Old Testament, for he has exerted more practical influence upon readers of the Bible, and especially upon young men, than any other Bible character." Plato said, "To be ignorant of the lives of the most celebrated men of antiquity is to continue in a state of childhood all our days." If this be so, then God forbid that we remain ignorant of the life of Daniel, for he is indeed one of the most celebrated men of antiquity. Ezekiel, who was his contemporary, and who was carried captive just a few years after Daniel, all ready in his lifetime classed Daniel as one of the three greatest men of faith. In Ezek. 14:14 God speaks of His wrath against the wickedness of the land and says, "Even though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they would by their righteousness deliver only their own lives."**

**Daniel had gained unique favor with God, and he was the hero of his people during their captivity. It was, no doubt, his loyalty to God as a leader in high places that kept many of the Jews faithful during their 70 years captivity. The Jewish Talmud pays him the highest respect when it says, "If all the wise men of the nations were in one scale of the balance, and Daniel in the other, he would outweigh them all." And Daniel chose to put all his weight on the side of loyalty to God, and that is why he is a classic example of an overwhelming minority. We want to consider his forced captivity and his free conscience. First look at-**

## **I. HIS FORCED CAPTIVITY.**

**Daniel was not carried away captive to Babylon because of his own sin anymore than Jesus was nailed to the cross because of any personal sin. Daniel was among the loyal and righteous minority,**

**but the innocent minority must often suffer because of the folly and corruption of the majority. When Josiah was king and Daniel was just a little boy it looked as if there was going to be a revival, and a great turning of the people back to God. It did get a good start when Josiah became king and at age 16 began to seek after God. By the time he was 20 he had become to such conviction and commitment that he began an all out destruction of the system of idolatry. In II Chron. 34:4 we read, "And they broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and he hewed down the incense altars which stood above them, and he broke in pieces the Asherim and the graven and the molten images, and he made dust of them and strewed it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them."**

**Daniel was born in a day when an overwhelming minority was in control, and there was strong devotion to God, and repulsion from idolatry. Like so many revivals, however, this one only influenced a few in any permanent way. Josiah was killed by the Egyptians and his sons who took his place, and especially Jehoiakim, did that which is evil in the sight of God. In a few years the people went off the road of revival into the ditch of degradation and God gave them into the hand of the king of Babylon in 606 B. C. This marked the beginning of the 70 year Babylonian Captivity of the Jews. Nebucadnezzar had to come against Jerusalem two other times in force, and the third time in 588 B. C. he destroyed it and the temple. The first time when Daniel was taken was mild in comparison. The temple was not destroyed, but just the cream of the crop of the youth was carried away.**

**Daniel was among this cream of the crop youth. Unlike many of the heroes of the Old Testament Daniel was not a shepherd boy. He was a rich kid from a high-class family with the best training and education of his day. Daniel's story is not that of the poor boy on the wrong side of the tracks who rose to fame. His is the story of a boy who had every natural advantage for success from the start. He had**

**money, noble birth, brilliant mind, and a strong handsome body.**

**Daniel's glory consists in his loyalty to God in spite of all the advantages he had to be a success and to be popular with the world without God. God can and does use men from the scrap heap of life, but Daniel is an illustration about how God also uses the cream of the crop for His glory. We have a good description of what Daniel was in his background and personal appearance in verses 3-5. Jewish tradition says, "He was of a spare, dry, tall figure, with a beautiful expression." He was tall, dark and handsome and a brain, and he was only about 14 years old when he was carried away to a strange land. There they changed his life as much as they could to absorb him and his companions into the Babylonian culture.**

**They began to indoctrinate him in Chaldean lore and knowledge. They changed his name from Daniel, which means God's judge, to Belteshazzar, which means Bel's Prince. Bel was the god of Babylon. If ever a young person lived in a day of change where the pressure to forsake the true God for a false faith was pushing on every side, it was Daniel. No minority was ever nearer the brink of extinction than was Daniel and his companions in the captivity of Babylon. Yet in that captive setting all of the pressures and all of the changes had not captured Daniel's heart, mind, and soul. He was in a forced captivity, but his conscience was still free, and we want to look at that now.**

## **II. HIS FREE CONSCIENCE.**

**Verse 8 says that Daniel was resolved not to defile himself with the king's food and wine. Most all agree that because the king's provisions were first offered to his pagan gods it would be a compromise with idolatry for Daniel to eat of it. He and his companions refused to compromise with idolatry. On the state capital building in Sacramento, California these words are**

**inscribed: "God give us men to match these mountains." Daniel was just such a man in his day. He was a match for the mountainous obstacles to loyalty to God in captivity by a pagan society.**

**We need to stop complaining that the world is so strong, and that non-Christian forces around us are dragging us down. They drag no one down but those who stoop. Daniel stood erect in his day. His convictions did not melt under the fires of pressure and persecution. His loyalty did not fly away with the fleetness of a deer for fear of the lions of opposition. Right from the start on the very first point of where he was tempted to compromise, he said "No!" They could change his location, his education, and his occupation, and even his name, but his conscience they could not change. It remained free from their captivity, and stayed loyal to God. He refused to defile his conscience regardless of the actions of the majority.**

**A doctor examined a patient and told him he had a serious condition. The best thing to do he told him was to give up smoking, drinking, and fast living. The man thought for a minute and then asked, "What's the next best thing?" The next best is what the majority shoots for. The best is too hard and calls for absolute allegiance to the Almighty. Only those among the overwhelming minority choose to stand with Daniel for God's best. He had 3 companions who stood with him on this matter of conscience. The implication is that the majority of the Jewish youth in captivity operated under the philosophy-when in Babylon do as the Babylonians do.**

**I can just imagine one of them surprised at Daniel's decision to refuse the king's food, and saying, "What is with you Daniel? All of the guys are doing it and why not? This is a time of war, and besides, God certainly doesn't care now. He let you get captured**



**didn't He? Why should you worry about Him? Live it up Danny boy, it's later than you think. Junk this religion bit and get with the times. Nobody keeps those old fashion rules anymore, for times have changed radically." Young people face this type of argument in every age. Only the few dare to be Daniels and dare to stand alone in their loyalty to God, but these few are the overwhelming minority that God uses to accomplish His will in history.**

**Daniel refused to be taken captive in conscience, and he won the battle by remaining faithful. Scripture says, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." Daniel made a good start, and then continued all his life to the end of captivity in loyalty to God. The result was that he was used marvelously of God, as no other man in history, as an adviser to some of the greatest rulers in history. God's people were scattered and in captivity, but God continued to work and speak through His overwhelming minority.**

**"Minorities since time began  
Have shown the better side of man,  
And often in the lists of time,  
One man has made a cause sublime."**

**The tragedy that overtook Daniel, which was not due to any sin of his at all, did not fill him with resentment. God could use Daniel because he was a man who did not let life's rotten deals fill him with bitterness. Overwhelming minorities are persons who do not let life's unfairness rob them of their loyalty to God. Studies indicate that numerous people who get a raw deal in life, and who suffer unjustly, become bitter and resentful against God. It is only the overwhelming minority who can, like Daniel, suffer terrible injustice and still be a powerful force in the world for God. Edmund Cooke wrote-**

**"Oh, a troubles a ton, or a troubles an ounce,**

**Or a trouble is what you make it,  
And it isn't the fact that you're hurt that counts,  
But only how did you take it?"**

**The tragedy is that many Christians facing what Daniel did would be filled with anxiety and much resentment. Resentment puts the whole mental system of a person in a state of civil war. Life is filled with things to resent, and not a day goes by in this life where we are immune to being hurt by friend or foe. We are most often hurt by those we most need and love. Christians are seldom hurt by those who are not Christians. All of the petty things we endure in a lifetime are not to be compared to being hauled off into captivity, yet we often find it hard to keep resentment from taking us captive. It is so hard to surrender and leave it in the hands of God as Daniel did. Christians have breakdowns at the same rate as non-Christians because they do not learn to deal with life's burdens the way Daniel did. They rob themselves of power and health because they will not let go of their resentments. They would not dream of contaminating their bodies with drugs or alcohol, but they let resentment fill their life with destructive chemicals and emotions.**

**If anyone had just reason for complaint, it was Daniel. He could have been filled with hate toward all the idolatrous Jews whose wickedness led him to become a captive in a pagan land. Daring to be a Daniel is to put all of the bad breaks and rotten deals that have ever happened to you behind, and press on into the future with a determination to put the stubborn ounces of your weight on the scale of loyalty to God. By so doing you join that group that God uses to change the world, which is the overwhelming minority.**

## **2. COMPROMISE   Based on Dan. 1:1-8**

**A man who had been a notorious thief was telling a friend how going to church had really changed his life. He was in a store just that week and saw the nicest pair of boots. They were just his size, and while he was there the owner of the store stepped out. He could have easily slipped them under his coat and gotten away, and ordinarily he would have, but this time he resisted the temptation. The devil said to take them but the Lord said not to, and there I was in the middle. He concluded, "I didn't know what to do, so I compromised. I took a pair of shoes instead."**

**Obviously his life was not as dramatically changed as he thought, for his compromise still left him as a thief. The question is, however, is all compromise of this same worthless nature? Is Reginald Kauffman accurate when he says, "Compromise is never anything but an ignoble truce between the duty of a man and the terror of a coward." Or is Edmund Burke the one who speaks the truth when he says, "All government indeed, every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue and every prudent act is founded on compromise and barter." Any wise student seeing these on a true or false test would mark them both false, for one has a never and the other an every, and an absolute is almost always false. Neither extreme can be defended which says that compromise is always a virtue or always a vice.**

**This question on compromise is stimulated by this first chapter of Daniel because it appears that there is a contradiction in Daniel's attitude. He refuses to compromise when it comes to eating heathen food, but he submits without objection to a heathen education and a heathen name. Some commentators question Daniel's values here. They wonder why he draws the line where he does. It seems to be such a minor point on which he resists, and then he goes along with more major issues. It has to be admitted that Daniel did enter into involvement with the pagan culture on many levels. But he refused**

**to do so on this level of eating. I think it is worth our time to try and discover the difference, for this would give us instruction for our own lives as to our own relationship to our culture. I think there are at least three kinds of compromise, and each of them is illustrated by Daniel's experience in Babylon. First we see-**

## **I. COMPROMISE WHICH IS A VIRTUE.**

**The first thing we have to do is establish that this can be so, and that compromise is not an absolute evil. John Herman Randall Jr. wrote, "Now anybody who is capable of learning anything from experience knows that the only way to get along with people, the only way to do anything together with anybody else, is through compromise. You don't need exceptional brains to realize that. You need only to be married or to have a friend." If your wife insists that you go on a picnic on a Saturday, and you insist that you go on it on Sunday, and both of you hold your conviction with the view that it is evil and cowardly to give in, you have a situation which one can predict will lead to a dark future.**

**If one yields to the other and avoids the conflict, it is a virtue. It is a virtue because it compromises only personal interests and not any principle or moral that affects your relationship to God. Examples of this kind of compromise are endless. It would be tragic if there were no such thing as compromise between management and labor. If neither made any concession, but were uncompromising in their demands, our whole economic system would be in chaos, and nothing would ever get settled. One could make 20 compromises a day on the level of human relationships, and not in any way be out of God's perfect will.**

**This is the kind of compromise Daniel made on the matter of the pagan education he was to receive. He no more compromised his loyalty to God at this point than does a Christian youth who goes off**

to a secular university to study ancient mythology under an atheistic professor. Daniel was getting one of the best educations of the day. The Chaldeans were advanced and cultured, and they had plenty to offer. The fact that they also had some weird courses on astrology and magic made no difference. A youth like Daniel, who had been instructed in the truth, and who had an intimate relationship with the true God, would be no more disturbed than a mature Christian today would be by taking a course in mythology.

It was a good thing for Daniel to get an education, even if it was from a pagan viewpoint. Moses was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and this also was in God's providence. If Daniel was going to be a leader of great influence for God, he had to learn the Babylonian language, culture, etc., just as missionaries today study all sorts of strange things in seeking to understand the culture of the pagans they are trying to reach for Christ. To be used in this world we must see that it is a virtue to compromise and give some time to the learning of what is part of a pagan culture so we can understand those who are captivated by it, and be more effective in combating it. Daniel may have had other plans for his life's studies before he was taken captive, but had he been unbending and refused to study under the Chaldeans, he would have been no good to God or his people. Daniel was too wise to be stubborn here. He gladly took the opportunity to learn all he could, and such a compromise was a virtue. Next we look at-

## **II. COMPROMISE WHICH IS A NECESSITY.**

There are compromises which are not in any way virtues, and are even partly tinged with any evil, but which are the lesser of two evils, and, therefore, are necessary. An example would be, if a drunk comes charging at you with a knife, and in the fight you are forced to save your life by fighting so furiously that you kill the attacker in self-defense. Here is a case of a necessary compromise

**on the commandment against killing. It is no virtue to have killed the man, but it is less evil than if you who are innocent are the one who is killed. This illustration does not leave much room for choice, but the same thing can apply where there is premeditated choice. It happens all the time in politics. A man can be an idealist and refuse to settle for anything less than utopia, but he will get nowhere. It is the man who is willing to compromise and take little steps at a time who can move forward. He may have to stand for less in order to get something rather than nothing. If a man always says all or nothing, he is more likely to get nothing.**

**So there are points in life where a believer must compromise in a way that is not virtuous, but yet not totally evil either. It is a matter of the lesser of two evils. Luther said that we must exist in compromise where there is no such thing as existential perfection. For example, if you were in Russia and two Christians escaped from prison where they were political prisoners falsely condemned to die, and they came to your home for refuge, and the state police come searching and asking if you had sent two escapes convicts, would you say, with Washington, "I cannot tell a lie," and give them up, or would you compromise on what you believe about lying. Would you insist that love for your brothers in Christ is greater than the obligation to tell the truth? Would you say then that you had not seen them? Situation ethics says that love alone is the absolute, and if need be all other laws can be broken to keep the law of love. Dwight Eisenhower said, "People talk about the middle of the road as though it was unacceptable. Actually, all human problems, excepting morals, come into the gray areas. Things are not all black and white. There have to be compromises. The middle of the road is all of the usable surface. The extremes, right and left, are in the gutters."**

**This is not just a made up illustration, for there are decisions like this that people are making all the time, and they are forced to**

**compromise truth and principles for the sake of love, or for the sake of a greater good. Winton Churchill said that this is essential in political life to escape total impotence. But the fact that it is necessary does not make it a virtue. Let us never think that it is good in itself to compromise because love demands it, or because it is a matter of necessity. It may be the lesser of two evils, but it is nevertheless an evil.**

**How does Daniel's experience fit this category? On the matter of accepting the change of his name from one that gives a witness to God to one who gives a witness to a pagan god, we have to admit there is no virtue in this at all. There was a tinge of evil, as Daniel comes close to the system of idolatry. He may have despised it, and he would have denied he would ever do such a thing earlier, but now he compromises. He had no choice because it was a matter of necessity. He could not control what his captors called him. He and his companions may not have called each other by these names, but likely they did.**

**Most Christians know the three companions by their pagan names of Shadrack, Meschack and Abed-nego rather than by their Hebrew names. They might have put a futile fight over the issue and lost their chance for an education, but they choose to endure the change. It was a compromise of necessity because resistance would end only in lost opportunity to be used of God. It was better to allow the evil of the names and offset it by living for the glory of God in that negative situation. Next we see-**

### **III. COMPROMISE WHICH IS VICE.**

**For Daniel this was the compromise over eating meat offered to idols, and wine dedicated to a pagan god. This was the line they would not cross. Compromise like this was totally evil. In the New Testament this particular issue changed, and eating meat offered to**

**an idol was no longer an absolute sin. In the Old Testament, however, it was a matter of law and God's clear revelation. The mark of a godly man was his loyalty to what he knew of God's law. Daniel's contemporary was Ezekiel, and he wrote in Ezek. 4:14, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I have never defiled myself; from my youth up to now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has foul flesh come into my mouth."**

**The issues they faced were certainly different from what we face today, for we are free from all those provisions of the law on clean and unclean foods. Nevertheless it was God's final word up to then, and it called for absolute loyalty. To compromise on what is clearly revealed is outright rebellion against God when one is not trapped by necessity to do a lesser of two evils. Daniel was not trapped by necessity on this point. He had the opportunity to try and escape from partaking of the food. Had there been no escape Daniel may have chosen to die rather than compromise, for he did so later on the matter of prayer, and he was cast to the lions. There are absolutes, which are not to be compromised even if the consequence is death. Such was the case with the many martyrs who were killed by refusing to deny Christ. Rudyard Kipling wrote,**

**Man, a bear in most relations, worm and savage otherwise-  
Man propounds negotiations, man accepts the compromise-  
Very rarely will he squarely push the logic of a fact  
To its ultimate conclusion in unmitigated act.**

**This is true for Christians also. It is rare that our stand must be absolute and uncompromising, but when it comes to matters of clear revelation concerning Jesus Christ the Christian dare not compromise, but push the logic of Christ's Lordship to its ultimate conclusion, and recognize that death is the lesser of two evils if the choice is between death and the denial of Christ. We need to pray for wisdom in our dealings with the world that we might be able to**



**clearly discern when compromise is wrong, and when it can be legitimate and beneficial to the kingdom of God.**

### **3. FRIENDLY ENEMIES Based on Dan. 1:9f**

**One of the perpetual questions in the life of a believer is, what should my relationship be to unbelievers? Can a Christian be a real friend with a non-Christian? What if his beliefs and actions are obviously contrary to Christian values? Is the often-quoted verse for separation to be our guide? It says, "Come out from among them and be separate says the Lord." Does this verse mean we ought not to have fellowship with the unbeliever? These are questions of such a practical nature that we answer them in living regardless of what conclusions we come to theoretically.**

**Everywhere I ever worked I had to get along with non-Christians. I had to work along side of them in a common effort. For 4 years I worked in a printing company where my boss was an atheist. He had no love for spiritual things at all, and yet I had to obey his orders and cooperate with him as a Christian. I debated the faith with him often, and I had much in common with him even though I was a child of God, and he was a child of darkness. We were opponents and yet we were also friends. He did not care for my beliefs, and I did not care for his, but we were friendly enemies.**

**It would be foolish for me to believe theoretically that a Christian can never be friends with a non-Christian, for in actuality I have already been friends with them. Does this mean I do not believe in separation? Not at all! These men I worked with had many evil habits, and they lived for material and sensual pleasures, which was especially evident at the annual Christmas party. It was**

**no problem at all to be friends with him and still be totally separate from their non-Christian living. Every Christian who works has a similar experience. There is no contradiction at all in being separate from sinners and at the same time being friends with sinners.**

**Jesus was a friend of sinners, and yet He was totally separate and undefiled. Separation is not isolation. Jesus associated with publicans and sinners, and He won them to Himself without ever participating in any of their sin. This ability to be friendly with those outside of the kingdom of God without forsaking that kingdom yourself is a major characteristic of those people whom God uses to reach the world.**

**The two men in the Old Testament who had the most outstanding ministries among the Gentiles were noted for this ability. Joseph rose to a top position of leadership in Egypt because of his ability to work in harmony with those who even worshipped false gods. His brothers were hard to get along with even though they were of the same faith. But he knew how to win friends and influence people among pagans, and God used him in a mighty way. His God-given ability to interpret dreams was the key factor in his rise to power, but without the ability to be friends with men of false faith he may never have been given the chance to use that gift.**

**Daniel's life is a close parallel to that of Joseph. He was not sold into captivity like Joseph, but he was carried away by enemy forces. He too rose to a position of leadership in a great pagan empire, and did so by means of his God-given power to interpret dreams. He, like Joseph, gained the opportunity to use his gift because of his ability to get along with his pagan captives. Daniel was determined to remain undefiled by pagan practices, and one might think that a man with such deep conviction would probably be unable to get along with anyone who does not see eye to eye with him on everything. But Daniel was not this way at all. In fact, the paradox**

**is that Daniel needed and got pagan help to remain loyal to his God. This, of course, was all in the providence of God, for God brought Daniel into favor with the prince of the eunuchs. Here was a friendship of a believer and a pagan that was not only approved by God, but appointed by God.**

**Just as I am sure that Jesus did not get people to love Him by a miracle, but won them by His own friendliness, so I am sure Daniel won the favor of this pagan by his friendly nature. Daniel was the brilliant, yet humble clean-cut, kind of young man that would take personal interest in another person, and just naturally win their friendship. Daniel was a worshipper of the true God, and yet he was a friend of one who was an idolater. The result of this was that by this pagan's help he was able to maintain his standards without losing his life. Christians today need to be people who can make friends with all kinds of other people who are outside the kingdom of God. It is the only way to be an effective servant of God. A Christian in business, politics, or any aspect of life that calls for dealing with many people will have to have non-Christian friends. It is essential both for success in his secular task as well as in his spiritual task of witnessing.**

**But what of the Scripture that says that all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution? Doesn't this contradict what I have just said? Not if we see it as a paradox. It is no contradiction that a believer can be both loved and hated by unbelievers. Both can be true just as they were in the case with Daniel. Those who ruled with Daniel became so jealous of him that they devised the plan that led to his being cast to the lions. Their hate, however, did not mean that all non-believers hated him, for this eunuch, plus the king himself, loved Daniel. Some loved and some hated, and so it will ever be.**

**If we see the statements of the Bible as paradoxical we avoid a**

lot of futile arguments. It says clearly that both can be true, and that godliness will bring both peace and persecution. Prov. 16:7 says, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Here we have the paradox of friendly enemies. They are enemies who will keep the peace with you. When a person is truly godly they will experience both sides of the paradox, for some non-believers will love them, and others will hate them. We are in this text focusing on the friendly relationships of Daniel.

The chief of the eunuchs no doubt recognized that Daniel was standing on a principle when he refused to eat meat offered to a god he did not believe in, and he respected that stand. To take a dogmatic stand and refuse to compromise a conviction does not have to lead to bigotry as Daniel demonstrates very admirably. Had he taken the negative approach and began to rail at the utter stupidity of the Babylonians in their idolatry, he probably would have gotten nowhere but to an early grave. Isaiah and Jeremiah did this, and they hit idolatry with everything they had. But we need to make a very important distinction. These prophets spoke to God's own people. They rebuked, warned and condemned because they spoke to Israel as a straying child and unfaithful wife. Daniel was not a prophet to his own people, but to the Gentiles. His manner was altogether different. His victories had to be gained through the channels of diplomacy. He had to be a believing politician in an unbelieving society.

Daniel was able to recognize that he needed help from his captors, even though God was his helper, for he recognized that God works by means and only rarely does he work directly. Daniel, therefore, approaches his friend, the chief of eunuchs, and he asks a favor. His friend wanted to help but points out the risk he would be taking. Anyone who dared to interfere with an oriental ruler's command could be killed immediately with no chance for a trial, or

**even an explanation. It appears that he is saying that he won't help, but the very next verse 11 indicates that he told Daniel to take the matter to a lesser officer who would risk less chance of detection, sense he himself would be able to handle the matter if someone decided to report it.**

**Daniel, therefore, appeals to the steward, and he agrees to take the risk. Here was a pagan willing to risk his life so Daniel could be loyal to his conviction. We have no reason to believe that this man agreed with Daniel's convictions, or that he ever accepted Daniel's God as his own God, but he respected Daniel, and he gave him a chance to prove himself. We see Daniel's first success at going through the proper channels of authority to accomplish his purpose. He was kind and did not demand his rights, for in his circumstances he had none. But he requested from these pagans an opportunity to prove that he could be loyal to his God and not be of less value to them, but even more.**

**Daniel and his 3 companions were allowed to eat vegetables and water for 10 days. This was a strange diet, and one that would cause the steward to probably worry, for if they began to lose weight and get weak, it would mean his head. They won the chance to give it a try, and only a truly Christ-like character could induce a pagan to take such a risk. Joseph Seiss observing this wrote, "An obtrusive piety is never of God. True religion is always courteous, modest, and anxious to avoid unnecessary collisions. With all its inflexibility it is always amiable and kind. There be some who seem to think they cannot be faithful without being rude, or true to God without harshness toward men." Daniel did not compromise on his convictions or loyalty to God, and was still able to maintain a courteous and respectful attitude toward his pagan captives.**

**Several commentators point out another valuable lesson from Daniel's attitude. He used persuasion to get this pagan friend to**

take a risk for him. This is the only legitimate means of getting men who are not committed to your cause to take a risk for it. To use force to compel a man to take risk for that which he had no conviction is immoral, and is a denying him of his right to be loyal to his own convictions. Alexander Maclaren said years ago, "Martyrs by proxy, who have such strong convictions that they think it somebody else's duty to run risks for them, are by no means unknown." As Christians we have no right to expect a non-Christian to risk anything for us unless we can persuade him to do so voluntarily. Daniel's friendly manner was used of God to persuade this pagan to take the risk. It turned out that the risk was no real danger after all, for in verse 15 we read that Daniel and his friends thrived on their diet. They were better looking than all of those who ate the rich food of the king. So they were free to eat what they chose from then on, and to remain undefiled.

The text goes on to point out how God so richly endowed these faithful youth. They were wise and skilled in learning. They probably learned all kinds of nonsense as well, but one does not need to be any less loyal to truth because he becomes informed about error. This gift of learning was also likely providential and not miraculous. They had to put forth effort to study in order to acquire knowledge. It was not just put into them by God. To the Jews all of life was under God's guidance, and not just the supernatural. The Jews also had a high regard for education and the learning of wisdom. Most of the heroes of the Old Testament were men of wisdom. Daniel and his companions were all that an ideal Jew should be.

Daniel was not only blessed with the ability and skill to learn, but he also had a unique and miraculous gift of being able to understand dreams and visions. This is preparing us for what comes later in the book, for the book centers around Daniel's ability to interpret dreams, and they make up a large part of the book.

**When the 3 years of training ended Daniel and his 3 companions were brought before the king. He apparently gave them an oral test by asking questions. He found them to be 10 times better than all the magicians and enchanters in the land. Daniel was the valedictorian of his graduating class. This first chapter ends by bringing us to a point where Daniel is seen to be a man that must be reckoned with, for he is loyal to God and superior to the pagans who hold him captive. He lives right through the whole length of the Babylonian empire to the time of Cyrus when the 70 years captivity ends, and the Jews return to their land. The setting is laid, and it is one that is bound to produce some exciting stories about Daniel and his friends, and also of his friendly enemies, and his not so friendly enemies.**

#### **4. A TROUBLED DREAMER Based on Dan. 2:1-18**

**When John Wesley returned to England from his fruitless visit to America, he learned that on another ship in the harbor his friend Whitefield was about to sail to America. This depressed Wesley for he had hoped to have fellowship with Whitefield. Early in the morning he sent a message by boat to the other ship. He said, "Tell Mr. Whitefield that I have had a dream during the night, and that it has been made clear to me that he is not to go to America." George Whitefield received the message and paced the deck in deep thought. He then said to the messenger, "Go back and tell Mr. Wesley that if God had wished me to turn back He would have given me the dream. Why should He send the dream to Mr. Wesley?" And so he went on his tour to America. Whitefield was sound in judgment in this situation, for one could have very little assurance concerning the message of a dream unless he had the dream himself.**

**No doubt, this is why God spoke to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream,**

even though he could not understand it. Had Daniel come to him with a dream that he had, the king would not be interested at all. a man is only concerned about his own dreams, and this was especially true in a day when men recognized dreams to be possible messages from God. Here is a pagan king and God communicates to him in a dream. He may not have listened to a prophet, but a dream is so personal that he cannot refuse to pay attention.

Sometimes the dream is used by God to communicate clearly when there is no other means available. Such was the case with the dream of Joseph about taking Mary as his wife, and about fleeing to Egypt. Such was the case with the warning in a dream to the wise men to go home by a different route. The dream is usually a secondary method, and is often just a vague and obscure message that calls for an interpreter. Such was the case with the dream of the baker and butler in prison with Joseph, and also that of the Pharaoh. They provided the opportunity for God's man to become known through his gift of interpreting. This was also the case with Daniel. If the king had not had this dream Daniel would never have had the opportunity to demonstrate his God-given gift.

We see then that God's providence is the case of Daniel's rise to a position of trust and power, for God opens the door of opportunity. Two things are needed for any of us to be used of God. First of all, like Daniel, we must develop our gifts, which God has given, and secondly we need to pray that God would open up doors of opportunity to use these gifts. Preparation and then opportunity are two essentials. Had Daniel not first of all prepared himself, and been in the position among the scholars, he never would have had the opportunity to interpret the king's dream. Had God spoken to the king in a dream before Daniel was there in Babylon, there would have been no one to interpret it, and there would have been a futile slaughter of the wise men. We see then that God prepares His man first. He needs a man ready to lay hold of the opportunity before he



**opens the door of opportunity. If people prepare and develop their gifts, God will open the way for those gifts to be used.**

**Lets look at the series of events that led Daniel to a place of leadership in a pagan empire. The king is a troubled man for he has had a dream and does not know the meaning of it. It bothers him and he cannot sleep. His loss of sleep makes him a real bear, and he becomes severe in his anger toward his wise men who fail to tell him the meaning of the dream. He is a great ruler who has built a city enclosed by a wall containing more masonry than the Great Wall of China. He has even built an artificial mountain inside of it for his wife. Few kings could boast of greater glory, and the whole world was at his feet. But he knew that empires can fall rapidly, and the Persians and Greeks were doing some marvelous things that could threaten his empire.**

**No one could blame him for being nervous and upset over the dream. The impression that one has at first is that he is just another tyrant who will reap as he sowed in hell, but as you study deeper you tend to feel that you will one day talk with this great king as a humble servant in the kingdom of God. My own experience has been like that of Alexander Whyte who said after he studied the life of Nebuchadnezzar: "I cannot conceive where I got my bad opinion about Nebuchadnezzar.... I have read nothing nobler about the best kings of Judah, or Israel, or Scotland, or England." If your first impression of this man is poor, do not judge him by that, for before we are done with our study you may conclude that he was a saved man that we will see in eternity.**

**Nebuchadnezzar in his troubled states calls for all the wise men to come and help him with his dream. Some were specialists in the books of wisdom, others in whispering incantations, and still others in reading the stars. He brought all the experts together to solve the mystery of his dream. But when he asked them to tell them the**

**dream they respond that he must tell them the dream before they interpret it. He was in no mood to go half way with them. He said that they either make his dream known or else. He was saying, "I am going to pieces over this dream, and if you don't solve it you are going to go to pieces literally, for I will have you torn limb from limb, and all your houses will be destroyed." This was typical behavior for an Eastern king. Excessive punishment was the common thing. You eliminated a man's family and property completely as a standing memorial to the power of the king. God later judged them as they judged others, and he left Babylon in total ruins as a perpetual memorial of his sovereignty.**

**Nebuchadnezzar was fair, however, for in verse 6 he offers great reward if they do their job. About this time I can imagine there were many of the wise men who wished they had never been educated. They request again that he tell them the dream first. The king goes into a rage and accuses them of stalling for time and of planning to lie to him. He is not so foolish as they could wish. He knows it is easy to interpret a thing, and that anybody with a little skill can give some kind of meaning to any dream. The real proof of one's contact with the supernatural world would be to know the dream itself. He says in verse 9 that only if they can tell him the dream can he be sure of their interpretation. If men are truly in touch with the God who gave the dream then it will be no problem for them to get the dream from him. Nebuchadnezzar was a wise man, and he knew how to detect the true from the fake. He suspected that all who were before him were a bunch of fakes.**

**They respond that he is asking what no king ever asked before. He is being unreasonable in his demands. He is not playing according to the rules, for he is demanding what none but the gods themselves can supply. They were right, but that is precisely what made Nebuchadnezzar so angry. If they could not reveal what only the gods knew by being channels through which the gods spoke,**

**what good were they? If all they had was human ingenuity, then their system collapses. They are worse than no wise men at all, for all is deception, and so in fury Nebuchadnezzar orders the whole system destroyed, and all of the wise men killed. Here is pagan king who rebelled against the impotence of his pagan system of wisdom. This is a necessary step before a man will turn to the truth and be open to the true God. Men must see the folly, weakness and superficiality of their paganism before they are ready to listen to the truth.**

**His anger was excessive, however, and very unjust, for he ordered all wise men to be killed. This included those who never even had a chance, or those who never even knew of the king's dream, such as Daniel and his three friends. We see here the injustice of condemning a total class of people. The very person he was looking for was in that class that he was sending to their death. When they came to Daniel he did not act like a rebel. He very prudently became friendly with the captain of the king's guard. He was able to persuade the guard to tell him why the king was being so severe. When he heard the story he went right to the king and got him to listen to him. He then got his friends to pray with him that God would reveal the dream so they did not all have to perish.**

**We see here the natural response for self-preservation. Daniel and his friends wanted justice done, for their lives were at stake. To die for principle was something Daniel did not hesitate to do, nor did his three companions. They would not bow down to an idol and so they were cast into the fiery furnace. But when it comes to dying for the folly of others they are eager to escape, and so they plead for God's help. No man wants to die uselessly, and so they plead for God to come to their rescue. Had they died in this way they would not have been martyrs as they would have been had they died in the fiery furnace or the lion's den. A martyr is a witness who dies as a witness to his faith, and it would have been no such witness had they**

died because of lack of knowledge. Their prayer was answered, and we will see the results in our next study.

## **5. FREEDOM TO CHANGE Based on Dan. 2:1-23**

The War of 1812 is called the war nobody won. It was a very costly war for both United States and Britain, yet it was a war that accomplished nothing, and should never had been fought. In fact, the entire war was fought after the reason for it no longer existed. France and England were at war, and the United States was neutral. It was shipping goods to both nations. Britain decided no U. S. ships were allowed to go to France, and Napoleon countered with an order to confiscate all U. S. ships going to England. This put the U. S. right in the middle of the war with both sides against her.

The U. S. protested, and finally in 1811 got Napoleon to respect her neutrality and stop raiding U. S. vessels. Britain continued to attack American ships, however, and forced American seaman into the British Navy. Diplomacy was not working, and so President Madison urged congress to declare war. They did so on June 18, 1812. What Madison and congress did not know was that two days earlier on June 16, 1812 the British Council voted to cease interference with U. S. commerce. The problem was resolved and there was no need for war, but because communication was so slow, Britain and America fought a war based on the obsolete past. Had they known the present reality, and the change that had taken place, the war need never have been apart of history.

The tragic story is repeated at the end of the war. Far away in Ghent the American and British negotiators, out of sheer weariness with a meaningless war, signed a peace treaty on Christmas Eve of

**1814. But again, the good news could not travel fast in that day. The result was, one week later on New Year's Day of 1815, Andrew Jackson led the Americans in the great battle of New Orleans. It was the largest and bloodiest battle of the war, killing over 2,000 men. The tragedy is that it was fought after the war was already over.**

**Thank God for the radical changes in man's communication systems. Today, only seconds after a decision is made anywhere in the world, the news of it can be known in the rest of the world. Change is not always good, but change always advances the potential for good. Progress means man has found new and more effective ways to prevent folly, and to prevent the destructive forces in nature, and his own fallen nature. Progress is a positive word, for it represents a positive experience. It is advancement, moving ahead, climbing toward a goal. If you stay where you are, you can't get to where you ought to be, so progress is good. but progress means change, and change is not as clear cut a positive as is progress. You can't have progress without change, but not all change is progress. Change covers many complex circumstances both good and bad. That is why the thought of change can make us both hopeful and fearful. That is why a New Year holds before us both hope and fear. The fear that change will be negative, and the hope that change will be positive.**

**The one thing we know for sure is that change is certain. Change is inevitable in a world like ours, and though we love it or loath it, we have to live with it. Sometimes change seems progressive, and we can flow with the stream. Other times changes seems regressive, and we have to fight it, and swim against the stream. But one way or the other, we are always in the stream of change. Bob Dylan wrote,**

**Come mothers and fathers  
Throughout the land,  
And don't criticize  
What you don't understand.  
Your sons and your daughters  
Are beyond your command.  
Your old road is  
Rapidly agin  
Please get out of the new one  
If you can't lend a hand,  
For the times they are a-changin.**

**This sounds very contemporary, but it could have been a popular song back in Daniel's day. Daniel lived in a time of radical change where even the things tied down and locked in were changing. He and his friends, who were the cream of the crop, who were educated youth of Israel, were carried captive into the land of Babylon. All their dreams and plans for the future were radically changed. They had to give up their culture, and adapt to a totally new culture. They took on new names, a new language, and a whole new way of life in a foreign land.**

**There is no book of the Bible more filled with change than Daniel. It contains 14 references to Hebrew words for change, which is more than any other book. No other book better illustrates both sides of change, revealing it to be both hard, and healthy. We want to look at these two aspects of change as we are about to enter the New Year, for how we deal with change will determine, in large measure, what kind of year it will be. If we resist all change, it will be a year of folly, and not progress. If we receive all change without resistance, it will be a year of folly, and no progress as well. Change can advance both the causes of good and evil, or it can be much ado about nothing.**

Years ago a man lived between a coppersmiths and a blacksmith, and he suffered from noises from morning till night. He told them often that if they ever moved he would give them a party. One day the two smithies announced they were both moving. He was so overjoyed that he entertained them and their families sumptuously. After the feast he asked where they were moving. One of them answered, "I'm moving into his place and he is moving into mine." It is not paradox enough that change can be both good and evil, it can also be without any effect whatsoever. It can be a change that changes nothing. There are even changes that do less than nothing. Cy Ruddenbery tells of being on a Mexican airplane that taxied back to the ramp after being ready to take off. Then it taxied back out and took off. He asked the stewardess what happened back there, and she said the pilot found something wrong with the engine, and said it was too dangerous to fly. He asked if they changed the engine? She said, "Oh, no senior, they changed the pilot." Change is just too complex to consider all aspects, so we are going to keep it simple and look at just the negative and positive. First let's consider,

## **I. CHANGE CAN BE HARD.**

This is putting it mildly, as we look at the situation in our text. More accurately we could say that change is impossible. Nebuchadnezzar, the king, would ordinarily tell his wise men his dream, and they would interpret it. This is not really that tough, for since you are the expert, who is going to challenge your interpretation. It was really a good racket. But this time there is a nerve-wracking change. This time he wanted them to tell him the dream as well as the interpretation. This was a change they were not prepared for, and the result was, they went from being the favored class to the condemned class. All wise men were to be executed, and this included Daniel and his friends. I think it is safe to assume that none of the wise men liked this change. This was not progress, but a terrible change in circumstances that was hard to

**accept.**

**Change is clearly not good in itself. It can be the worse thing that can happen. When all is well, change often means going from the good old days of the pleasant past to the bad new days of the fearful future. Daniel lived in a day when the individual, and even the group, had far less freedom to determine their destiny than we do. There was no security. The king was a totalitarian ruler, and his whim or mood could mean death for anyone who fell out of his favor. Thank God for a land where power is controlled, and where government cannot change by mere whim or mood. We may not like the changes we experience either, but at least they come with some degree of order and warning. We do not have to endure spontaneous life and death changes like Daniel did.**

**Change is hard, but thanks to the changes of history change is less hard for us. Thank God for the changes that have taken tyrants like Hitler and Stalin off the throne. There are still tyrants in the world today, but they are known and kept under control by more powerful nations like the United States. We still live in a dangerous world, but we need to see it in perspective. There are more controls on the changes now than in past times. Daniel and his friends were condemned to die without a trial even though they were innocent of any crime. The whole Jewish race was subject to being wiped out based on mere prejudice. The point I am making is that people of the past faced more radical changes that were life threatening than we do today. Most of the changes we experience are progressive. They can still be hard to adjust to, but if Daniel could make the best of it in his tough time of transition, how much more should be able to make change count for good.**

**Being hard is not a good reason to resist change. Even good change can be hard. Vincent Teresa in My Life With The Mafia points out that the Mafia is always on the lookout for businesses that**



never change for they are the easiest to rob. He tells of a supermarket where the manager never varied his pattern. He went to the bank on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. He never changed his pattern, and so it was easy to break in on Sunday night and roll the safe right out the front door into a station wagon. He got 14 grand in cash, and a month later he went to the store and there was another cracker box safe just like the one he took. Nothing was changed. He watched the place for a week and saw there was no change in their routine whatever, and so he broke in again on Sunday night and got 17 grand that time. He said that had they responded to the first theft and changed their routine, and had some safety precautions, he never would have touched the place.

Change is a threat to the criminal. It may be hard to change, but it can be worth it, for it can prevent the criminal mind from taking advantage of the known routine. Satan, I am sure, is delighted when we get locked into a routine where we resist all change. He knows our pattern then, and we are predictable, and less of a threat. John Wesley changed the course of history, but he may not have made a mark on history had he not struggled to break through a very hard change. George Whitefield was a friend of Wesley, and he began a new ministry of preaching to crowds out in the open field. Churches closed their doors to him, and so he reached people in the open air. He called his friend John Wesley to come and take his place in these great open air meetings.

Wesley went to see for himself, and he wrote this in his journal, "I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields..... Having been all my life so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church." It was so hard to change, but he did it, and the result was his dying ministry was revived, and England and America, and the world have been radically changed because he was able to change.

**Change can be hard, but it is worth it because of the second point we want to focus on.**

## **II. CHANGE CAN BE HEALTHY.**

**Change was the key to Daniel's fame. Had all gone normally, he may have been a very successful man in Israel, but the world may never have known of him. It was the radical change that thrust him into a new world that led to his playing a major role in the plan of God for history. Daniel lived in constant change, and this led him to total dependence upon God. In the midst of constant change he had an unchanging loyalty to God, and the result was all of the changes were healthy for Daniel. He learned that the only way you can survive in a rapidly changing environment is to have a foundation that does not change. That foundation has to be above the changing environment, and, therefore, has to be in God, who alone is above and beyond the changing circumstances of earth. The hymn writer was right when he wrote, "Change and decay in all around I see, O Thou who changest not, abide with me."**

**Daniel let the impossible changes of time thrust him into dependence upon the God of eternity, and the result was, he grew and became one of the greatest men of God in history. Change was healthy for Daniel, for he used change for the glory of God. Daniel demonstrates that no change can come into life that cannot be used for good if it drives you to a deeper dependence on God. This means both the hopes and fears of the New Year can be beneficial to all of us if we let them lead us to look above and lean on the everlasting arms.**

**Change needs to be seen as a friend, and not as an enemy. The Bible begins with change. If it were not for change, we would not exist, nor would the universe, for in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. That was the most radical change on record,**

going from nothing to a universe that boggles the mind in greatness and complexity. And God said this change was good. Even after he rested and cease to create, He built change into His creation, and there has never been an unchanging moment since.

Daniel in verse 21 in praising God says He changes times and seasons, so we see good change in nature. He also says that He sets up kings and deposes them, so we see good change in government. He says that He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning, so we see good change in individuals. Change is part of God's plan, for only by means of change can nature, government, and man fulfill all of their potential. Progress demands change. Adam named all the animals, and developed a relationship with the animal world. Man is still doing this, and this constantly changing world of the interaction of man and animals is a lifetime study in itself. It leads to changes that benefit both man and animals.

Change is not a one way street, and there can be collisions as traffic goes both ways, and people abuse even good change. The greatest change Adam experience after going from non-existence to existence was the creation of Eve. This radical change in Eden was both his greatest blessing and his heaviest burden, for the change meant his destiny was not longer in his own hands only. Another now had some control. The more you develop loving relationships, the more your life is open to changes you cannot control. Fear of this keeps people isolated and uncommitted, for they do not want to risk losing control.

As risky as it is the Bible supports the risks of developing relationships. Take the risk of experiencing change that calls for adjustment, for the challenge of change is just what you need to fulfill your potential. Someone said, "The price of progress is the risk of change." Eve was the channel by which Satan introduced negative change into the flow of history. Sin came onto the stage,

**and ever since life is a complex struggle to know which stream is hazardous and which is healthy. The mistake we need to avoid is that of assuming that change that is hazardous is always unhealthy. Most of the changes that are God's will for man are hazardous, but very healthy for their growth and fulfillment of His plan.**

**Abraham was called to change his place of residence, and go to a new country. God changed his name, his house, and his destiny, and He made Abraham the father of His people. He faced hazards of all kinds. He was tempted in his new land and he fell. He had to fight for survival, and endure much, but it was all part of God's plan. We could study the lives of all the Biblical heroes, and the one thing they would all have in common, was God's call to change. Nobody in the Bible became famous for God by staying just as they were. They either changed things for the glory of God and the good of man, and became leaders in the kingdom of God, or they changed and corrupted the will of God and became enemies of the kingdom. Everybody who was anybody became famous or infamous by change.**

**Change is another word for freedom, for freedom means the choice to change. If you can't choose to change anything you are not free. Only those who can choose to change are truly free. The new year is filled with opportunities to exercise our freedom. We can choose to change in the new year. We can choose to change our state of knowledge. We have the freedom to select more resources to use to change our lives than any people who ever lived. Change is at our fingertips. It maybe hard and may even be hazardous, but it is healthy to change. It will be a happier new year if we resolve in our minds that we will make some changes that are clearly progressive, and which will lead us to be more of what we can be for the glory of God.**

**If we are committed to Christ, we are committed to change, for to**

**become more Christlike is to change. Man was formed and then deformed, and all his struggles are to be reformed, but Christianity comes along and says he needs to be transformed. The most radical changing agent in history is Jesus Christ. To believe in Christ is to believe in change. But studies show that many Christians have breakdowns because they try to change the wrong things, and they suffer defeat, disillusionment, and despair. We all need to pray Reinhold Niebuhr's prayer, "God grant me the serenity to except those things that cannot be changed; the courage to change those things that can be changed; and the wisdom to know the difference."**

**Bill Pilgrim in Slaughterhouse Five said he lived by this prayer, but he concluded that the things he could not change were the past, the present, the future. This kind of fatalism is very dangerous for those who really believe that no good change is possible. They tend to become agents of change for evil. One of the things we ought to fear is lack of change. Change may be hard, but lack of change is often a curse. Adolf Hitler was baptized as a Christian, but he never changed, for he never chose to let the spirit of Christ reign in him. His lack of change was a curse to the world. Al Capone was baptized a Christian, but he likewise did not give himself to be changed by the spirit of God. Joseph Stalin even went to seminary, but he was not changed by the Gospel.**

**The list could go on and on. Change is the best thing that can happen to a life. Being born again from above is the best change anyone can experience. That is change that leads to life and blessings for this world and all eternity. Those who do not submit to this change do not stay neutral. They begin to drift with the flow of change that leads to the satanic stream. The change for the worse, and all of their talents and abilities become dedicated to evil instead of good. Everybody is always changing. The question is, which direction is the change taking them? You will not be the same person who came into the church when you leave. You will have**

**opened yourself up to the Spirit of Christ and be more willing to change for His glory, or you will be hardened to change and will become less of what God wants you to be in the new year. It is not likely anyone is going to be just the same in the coming year. All will change and be better or worse than you were the year before.**

**Change is certain, but you must choose to change for the better. Sometimes it may be possible to sort of drift into the better Christian life but that is rare. The growing Christian is one who has to struggle and take risks to change. Just as the pole on all objects by gravity is downward, so the pole for change is always the downward pole of complacency. You've done enough; you've climbed enough; you have fought enough; now it is time to relax, level off, and be content. If Daniel would have done that, it would have been the last chapter in his life. He had to depend upon God for the impossible, and if he was to have any future, he had to press on to a higher level of dependence. Because we do not feel the same pressure Daniel did, we can choose not to press on and just settle down on the level where we are.**

**Change was the whole purpose of the life of Christ and His ministry. The lost were found; the sick were healed; the blind were made to see; the lame were made to walk; those in darkness came into the light, and their lives were changed. Jesus came to change things, and it was hard for the establishment to accept, and it cost him his life. But he got the job done, and changed all of history. He put the people of God under a new covenant of grace instead of law. The unchanging Christ changed everything, and that is still His plan. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and never ceases to change all who trust Him. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation.**

**The goal of every Christian in the new year should be to change so that some old things will become new. The world is always doing**

**this. They have a product that they claim is the best, but before you know it, they have a new label that says new and improved. They have found a formula for making it even better. That is to be the Christian attitude for the new year. Even if you feel you are a wonderful Christian, there are always areas for improvement. This means you cannot be content to stay the same. You must be committed to change.**

**If it is hard for you to change, start by doing something different each day that may be trivial. Walk a different way than usual; put on different clothes than usual; read or listen to something different than usual. Try to form some new pathways in your brain. Get out of the rut and expose yourself to something new, and in all your experiments seek to discover new ways to grow in your knowledge of God's Word, and in some service for Christ. Daniel adapted to change, and his greater dependence upon God led to many lives being spared, and many being blest. That same thing can happen in each of our lives, and we can be greater channels of blessing in the coming year if we will only exercise our freedom to change.**

## **6. A PRAYER OF PRAISE Based on Dan. 2:19-23**

**The point of interest in this passage is not the fact that Daniel and his friends prayed. This is neither unusual nor surprising under the circumstances. Their lives were at stake unless they had a direct revelation from God. One would be shocked if they did anything else but pray. One does not need to be a unique person of prayer to cry out to God when the danger is great. Even unbelievers pray when they face grave danger. The text, therefore, does not even give us the prayer he offered for help. It gives us the response he made in prayer after God granted the help by revealing to him the dream and**

**its meaning.**

**When he prayed for help his prayer was a solemn matter of petition, and his heart would be heavy. He would be on his knees, or flat on his face earnestly pleading for God's mercy. But in this response we see a totally different aspect of prayer. It is a matter of praise, and his heart would be light, and his body so filled with grateful joy that it is likely he would be standing or walking with eyes uplifted to heaven. The posture of prayer and the nature of prayer varies with the circumstances. There is no best way, for it is such a personal matter of one's own relationship to God that the best is relative to the individual. Two Christians going to prayer may be very different, and one may desire to fall on his knees before God while the other wishes to stand. Daniel goes through both of these in one night, and it is his shout of praise that is recorded.**

**Richard Llewellyn in How Green Was My Valley has this conversation. Mr. Gruffydd, a minister, tells a boy to keep his spirit clean, and the boy responds, "And how shall it be kept clean, Mr. Gruffydd?" He said, "By prayer my son, not mumbling, or shouting, or wallowing like a hog in religious sentiments. Prayer is only another name for good, clear direct thinking. When you pray, think well what you are saying, and make your thoughts into things that are solid. In that manner, your prayer will have strength, and that strength shall become a part of you, mind, body and spirit. I think the author has gone to far here in ruling out sentiment and the role of emotion, but what he does say is good. It fits the character of the prayers of the Bible.**

**Some of our best thinking and theology, and practical guidance for life comes from the prayers of the Bible. Daniel's prayer of praise is a prayer of solid things and clear thinking. We want to examine it from the point of view of what it teaches us about God. The first thing this prayer of praise teaches us is that-**



## **I. GOD IS WORTHY OF PRAISE.**

Someone has said, "There is something sweeter than receiving praise, the feeling of having deserved it." God alone is always deserving of praise, and that is why Jesus begins the Lord's Prayer with the adoration, "Hallowed be thy name." Daniel also begins with adoration: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever." Adoration of God is the highest attitude one can have in His presence. Someone has written, "In adoration the soul comes to God sensible of His love, majesty, holiness, and infinite greatness; feeling, and seeking more fully to feel the awe, reverence, and holy affection due to His great name; it transcends admiration and wonder; it is a blending of love with the fervent desire that all the world should know and magnify the glory of the Lord."

Our praise and adoration cannot exalt God objectively for He is already the highest and ultimate in majesty, but it does exalt Him subjectively by placing God in His rightful place in our lives and thinking, and that is right at the top if first place. And attitude of adoration and praise is essential if we are to have an adequate concept of, and relationship to God. God alone is worthy of the very highest of our emotional responses, and if He does not receive them then we are lacking an allegiance to Him. Or if someone else or something else receives them we are idolaters.

The occupation of heaven is praise someone said, and this is because those who are there are fully aware of the majesty of their Maker. On earth we often slip into an unawareness of the greatness of the God who loves and saves us. Because of this it is important that praise be a part of our prayer life, for praise tends to keep us conscious of our smallness and God's greatness. In petition and intercession we are usually focusing on self and others and human needs, but when we praise we are caught up to heaven to focus on God and his all-sufficiency for every need. In praise we focus on the

**Giver and not just the gift.**

**God does not need the creatures praise for he is self-sufficient, but the creature needs to praise the Creator to keep himself conscious that he is not self-sufficient but dependent upon the grace and mercy of the Creator. Praise is a benefit to man for both now and in preparation for eternity. Andrew Melville said, "Praise is the best auxiliary to prayer. He who most bears in mind what has been done for him by God will be most emboldened to ask for fresh gifts from above." To neglect praise does not injure God, but it injures your own soul and cuts your blessings in half because you lose the joy that comes with praise. Thomas Chalmers said, "One of the most essential preparations for eternity is delight in praising God." Man will be at his highest when his whole being expresses adoration for God. Faber looked into eternity and sang-**

**Father of Jesus, love's Reward!  
What rapture will it be,  
Prostrate before Thy throne to lie,  
And gaze and gaze on Thee!**

**The twenty four elders that John saw falling down before the throne of God were singing and this was their song in Rev. 4:11: "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power..." We praise God because he is worthy of our praise. Daniel in lifting his voice in praise to God makes it clear where his ultimate loyalty is placed. God is indeed his God, and he longs for his name to be blessed forever and ever. The second thing this praise prayer teaches us about God is-**

## **II. THE ATTRIBUTES THAT MAKE HIM WORTHY OF PRAISE.**

**The two that impress Daniel at this point are God's wisdom and**

**might. These are called His omniscience and omnipotence. He is all knowing and all powerful. Daniel is praising God for showing these attributes in his own life. In verse 23 he says he thanks and praises God forgiving him wisdom and strength. All the wisdom and power we have comes from God, who is the source of all wisdom and power.**

**Daniel is especially conscious of this, for let us remember, at the time that he is praying he has had a full revelation of the king's dream. He knows what history is going to bring forth in the future. He knows there will be many changes, and kings will rise and fall. This is what he is speaking of in verses 21 and 22. In verse 20 he names the two attributes, and then in 21 and 22 he spells out how they effect history. The first he explains is God's might. He changes time and seasons, and he removes kings and sets them up. Changing times are not mere accidents. They are a part of God's plan. Behind progress is a planner with a goal. God works in history through changes. We need to be among the optimists who believe that God is working even in the rapid changes of our time. It is easy to talk about God as a sovereign and powerful God of history, and then turn around and talk as if history was in the hands of men or Satan.**

**William James visited Thomas Carlyle in 1856 and afterward wrote this to a friend: "Carlyle, the same old sausage frizzling and sputtering in his own grease, only infinitely more unreconciled to the blessed Providence which guides human affairs. He names God frequently and alludes to the highest things as if they were realities, but it almost looks as if he did it only for a picturesque effect, so completely does he seem to regard them as habitually circumvented and set at naught by politicians." His belief in a sovereign God was only theoretical but not practical. He never carried the doctrine into reality, but kept it strictly in the realm of words.**

**I fear that Carlyle is not an isolated example, and that all of us tend to fall into this trap of keeping belief and action in water tight**

compartments. The Greek word for believe is so much a matter of action that there is an actual record of a farmer who believed his seed to the ground, he committed it and trusted it the ground. He bet his life on the fact that it would grow. Christian belief has got to be practical, or it is powerless. To believe seed will grow and never to act on it by planting the seed is not faith, but it is folly. So also to believe in a God of history who is sovereign, and yet to talk of only the despair and act as if it was only a meaningless mess is to deny in action what you profess in words.

Like Daniel we must not only say it, but live as if we really believed in God's power. We need to understand that being all powerful does not mean that he can do anything. Thomas Aquinas said, "Omnipotence is the power to do whatever does not involve a contradiction." This means that there is much in history that is not God's will, for He cannot let man be a free agent, and then make sure he does not use his freedom to do anything contrary to God's will. Evil will have consequences that are not God's will, but evil can only postpone God's plan. It cannot stop it, and so the Christian can always be hopeful, and they can always praise God because he will accomplish his purpose.

Daniel is greatly impressed also with the omniscience of God. He has all wisdom. There is no mystery so deep, or no question so dark that his light cannot penetrate it and make it clear. Daniel has just had it revealed to him concerning the great empires that will follow the Babylonian Empire, and he marvels at God's knowing the end from the beginning. Some poet has written,

Eternity with all its years,  
Stands present in Thy view;  
To Thee there's nothing old appears,  
Great God, there's nothing new.

**James says that if we lack wisdom we need to ask God, for He is the source of all wisdom. Daniel is praising God for the wisdom He is giving to him, and we are all wiser if we will follow his example and constantly praise God in prayer.**

## **7. LIGHT ALL THE WAY Based on Dan. 2:22f**

**Abraham Lincoln was greatly disturbed during the Civil War because he was so often given advice or denounced by persons speaking out of a vacuum of information and a reservoir of ignorance. One of his favorite stories was concerning a backwoods traveler lost in a terrific thunderstorm. He floundered through the woods until his horse gave out. He stood in the middle of the road hardly knowing which way to go as the lightning streaked and the thunder roared. One crash of thunder was like a bomb and it caused him to slip on the mud on his knees. He decided that he just as well pray while he was down there, and so he said, "Oh Lord, if it is all the same to you, give me a little more light and a little less noise."**

**This is what Lincoln needed in those dark and stormy days—light and not noise. Man needs the wisdom and light of God in times of crisis, and so it was in the day of Daniel. When he found himself on a stormy path over shadowed by the dark cloud of death he knew his only hope was in the God of light. Men often get into situations where they need knowledge and wisdom that is beyond their capacity to know or discover. This means that there is only one alternative to despair at such a time, and that is prayer. When all is hopeless and dark the believer in a sovereign and all knowing God still has hope. Prayer is a path that can still lead to light when all other roads are blocked.**

**Sometimes we speak disapprovingly of using prayer as a last resort, but let's be honest- prayer is a last resort when man faces darkness that is thicker than the light of his intellect can penetrate. You do not pray when you know the answer. When your own light is sufficient you don't call on the reserve power you have in God. When your strength is sufficient you praise the Lord and do the job with the tools you have. If Daniel had known the interpretation of the dream by his own wisdom and insight he would have told the king when he went to plead for time. He saw the king before he prayed to know the dream. He went to the king first so that he might fully understand the problem and when it was he needed to pray for. He knew after the visit that he needed more than a refresher course in dream interpretation. He needed more than ability to make a wise and clever guess. He needed a direct beam from the God of light.**

**Daniel needed the impossible from the human point of view. Nothing on the natural level was adequate for the task at hand. He needed supernatural help. God alone is the source of light that is beyond man's capacity to discover. In this prayer God is seen as the God of nature and history, but the strongest focus is on God as the source of revelation. He is the God who reveals to man what is hidden in the depth of mystery. Only God can know the future and reveal it to man as he does in the book of Daniel. Many critics reject the revelation of Daniel for they do not believe in a God who can know the future. They say it was all written after the events really happened. They reveal a god of their own making who is too small to know the future. But the God of the Bible is the God of revelation and he tells Daniel of what is going to come.**

**For those who believe in the God of the Bible there is no problem in believing that he knows the future, and that there is no darkness and mystery with him. David says in Psalm 139:12, "Even the darkness is not dark to thee, the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with thee." Job says in 12:22, "He uncovers the**

**deeps out of darkness, and brings deep darkness to light." The New Testament stresses that God is light and in him is no darkness at all, and then in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Those who have an adequate concept of God will not walk in darkness but will walk in the light. They will say with Mary Brainard who wrote-**

**I would rather walk in the dark with God  
Than go alone in the light;  
I would rather walk with Him by faith  
Than walk alone by sight.**

**Daniel did not always receive answers from God to get him off the hook, but he still followed the Lord faithfully, and he never let go of his trust in God, and the result was, he had protection in the darkness. He is praising God for the light he gave him on this dream that was so mysteriously dark. In verse 24 we see him going to Arioch. He was the man in charge of the horrible task of killing all of the wise men. He tells him to stop his killing plan for he has the interpretation that will satisfy the king. Daniel was not just concerned for his own neck and that of his friends. He felt it was wrong for any to die for not being able to know the impossible. He was concerned to save all of the wise men. Daniel became the savior of ungodly men. It was all of grace just as when we were yet sinners Jesus died for the ungodly. Daniel was a type of Christ at this point.**

**So often we see the wrath of God in the Old Testament, and we miss the times of his great mercy. Here we see a vast number of pagan scholars who are saved by the mercy of God in sending Daniel an understanding of the dream. God is ever willing to spare the ungodly. He spared all of Nineveh when they repented. He spared all of the pagans on the ship that went down with Paul. He was even willing to spare the pagans of Sodom if a few righteous people could be found in their midst. Here he spares a whole class of pagans. We**

**need to see this aspect of God's mercy so that we understand his wrath. It only comes when there is no way to show mercy, for there is no response to his offer, or no one to carry the offer to them. There is never a lack of love and mercy in God, but there is often a lack of repentance in man and an openness to God's mercy. Wrath falls on the people of God when they sin and fall away from God just as it does on the pagans. God is no respecter of persons. He is merciful to all, and he brings judgment on all who reject his love and mercy.**

**Because the king was not a totally stubborn king, and because he gave Daniel a chance to bring him the Word of God, the whole intellectual system of Babylon was spared. Daniel was the instrument by which God saves it and its leaders. There is no way to calculate the positive consequences of what Daniel did, and we can assume that there was a great deal of gratitude expressed to him. Calvin does not want to put a positive spirit in Daniel at this point of being a savior of these pagans. He writes, "I...think that Daniel spared the Magi, but not through any personal regard; he wished them to be safe, but for another purpose, namely to await their punishment from God." He is able to turn this whole positive picture into a negative. It is easy to disagree with a great man when he misses the obvious.**

**Daniel is no enemy of the pagan people he lives among. He has been helped by them to survive and he is a friend to them. His concern here is to prevent the unjust death of man who are innocent of any evil. Daniel was a true friend of these pagan colleagues, and so ought all of us to be to those we work with in the world. It is being a true friend of the lost that will lead many to want to know the God who makes you love them. Daniel, no doubt, won many pagans to belief in the God of Israel by his loving concern for them.**

**In verse 25 we see that Arioch must not have been a very bloodthirsty soldier, for he appears glad to escape the terrible task of killing the wise men. He rushes Daniel to the king to give the**



**interpretation of the dream. Daniel rises from the level of captive slave to a place of leadership in a pagan empire. God moves in mysterious ways to achieve his purpose in history. We need to learn from all of this that we too need to be optimistic, and we need to live in this dark world of paganism all around us, and, like Jesus and Daniel, be friends of sinners, and be ever walking in the light all the way.**

## **8. GOD'S INTERPRETER Based on Dan. 2:26-30**

**King Nebuchadnezzar was wise in taking a stand that was fool proof on getting a true interpretation of his dream. He demanded of the interpreter that he also produced the dream. Too many people in history have been gullible and they have accepted the lies of men for the leading of the Spirit. Some objective test like he required is just about the only protection there is against subjective revelations that lead to dead ends. Many who have such revelations are sincere, and they are anxious to be led of God. Like the woman in the nursing home who felt it was the leading of God to not take any of the medicine the nurse tried to give her. Her condition worsened, and then she thought the Lord let her down. She had a purely subjective experience, but she was sincerely wrong. We need to beware of taking subjective revelation too seriously.**

**Gideon is the man to follow when it comes to personal revelations. He tested the spirit to see if it was truly from God. He was skeptical and cautious to the point where he even feared that God might be angry with him. When God promised him he would deliver Israel by his hand Gideon was not satisfied until he had objective evidence. He heard the voice, but he did not want to take any chances. He put out a piece of fleece asking that God would give**

him objective proof of his revelation by filling the fleece with dew while all the rest of the ground remained dry. When he woke in the morning he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl while the rest of the ground was dry. Even one miracle was not enough, and so he asked the Lord to reverse the process so he could be sure this was not just an amazing coincidence. When this was also fulfilled he was confident that the Lord had spoken, and so he marched in obedience.

Those who do not test and see if the message is truly from God caused great grief for themselves and others. Joanna Southcott, for example, heard voices and started a movement and gained a following in England, Ireland and America. In 1794 the voice revealed to her that she was the bride of Christ spoken of in the book of Revelation. Later when she was 64 years old she said it was revealed that she was to give birth to the Messiah. Her followers were greatly excited when she actually showed signs of pregnancy. When the time passed and she did not give birth she became ill and was confined to bed. She confessed, "It all appears a delusion." She died apparently of a broken heart. She sincerely believed she had revelations from God. Had she been more objective she never would have allowed herself to be so deceived. Her movement continued and it led to British-Israelism, which has a large body of strange interpretations of the Bible.

Nebuchadnezzar was a smart enough man to demand objective proof of revelation from God, and Daniel was the man through whom God produced it. Notice how Daniel keeps himself out of the picture and gives all the glory to God. Daniel is concerned lest the king think that human wisdom had anything to do with this. No wise man could ever have fulfilled the king's demand, but he says in verse 28 that there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and that he has chosen to reveal to the king what will be in the latter days. The Pulpit Commentary says, "No nation in ancient times was so

**addicted to the study of the stars of heaven and to the future as were the Chaldeans." They looked to the heavens for guidance, but Daniel now calls the kings attention to the real source of all wisdom, which is the one true God of heaven who made the stars and all that is in the heavens.**

**J. A. Montgomery wrote, "That there is a God in heaven, as against man-made gods and deified men, is the supreme theme of the book, even as it is the cardinal principle of the Bible." Daniel here is being the strongest possible witness to the true God. If he can convince the king that Jehovah is the true God he will have accomplished a great service for the world. We see in the boldness of Daniel what each of us needs to be in order to have an adequate witness for Christ. That which made Daniel the great witness he was is the same thing that made Peter speak boldly before the Jews. The difference between a weak and a bold witness is found in a personal encounter with God. Daniel was brave and confident because he had just had a marvelous spiritual experience, and Peter was likewise bold because he had just had a personal encounter with the Living Christ. A man is bold when he is sure of his message, and certain of his relationship to God.**

**A weak witness is evidence of a lack of constantly growing in the knowledge of God, when we slow up and ease off onto a plateau of mediocre spiritual experience, then we cease to witness, for we have no dynamic power to make us effective. We are like a salesman who has lost interest in his product and who doesn't use it any longer himself. He cannot get very excited about anyone else using it. A good witness, like a good salesman, has to be sold on his product and excited about others discovering its value. Daniel was excited about the God of heaven and he wanted to point the king to Him. When we are excited about Christ and what He has done for us, and what He can do for others, we will have no trouble finding ways to witness.**

**Before Daniel conveyed to the king the dream and its interpretation he made sure that God would receive the glory. Before we look at the dream we want to consider what Daniel stresses here, and how God was concerned that the king know the meaning of the dream. That alone accounts for his being able to interpret it and not any unique wisdom of his own. The question is: Why would God give such a revelation to a pagan who was not among his own people, and who did not even believe in Him? We know God spoke to Cornelius in the New Testament, but he was at least a very devout believer in the one true God, though he did not know Christ. Nebuchadnezzar was not in the category of Cornelius at all. He was an oriental tyrant with the typical cruelty of such men. He had Zedekiah the king of Judah blinded after he was made to witness the execution of his sons. (II Kings 25:7). In this very chapter we have seen his anger, which was willing to kill every wise man in Babylon because they could not tell him his dream. And yet God gave him a special revelation about the future.**

**What this teaches us is that we ought to be aware of the superficial view that limits the actions of God to his own people. God can and does work with an through and for those who are unbelievers. We cannot and dare not confine God in our thinking, for to do so does not limit God, but it does limit our own recognition of the sovereignty of God in the world. God does not leave himself without a witness anywhere, and we cannot doubt that, for in the most unlikely places, and by the most unlikely means, God is working in the world.**

**I read Bertrand Russell's book Why I Am Not A Christian. It is a book by an atheist that can be used of God to enlighten His children. It is valuable to see what the Christian life looks like through the eyes of a non-believer. It reveals how blind they can be to the essence of Christianity, but it also reveals legitimate areas of failure, which ought to be corrected if we expect to communicate the**

**truth of God to the world. If we really believe in a sovereign God who is working in history, then we need to act like it and seek to find values for a life of service and praise out of all the negatives as well as the positives. God gave His people messages through pagan kings, and God is still a God of history today working through leaders of non-Christian nations.**

**Luther credited the devil with being one of his best teachers to make him a worthy minister. Samson found his honey in the carcass of a lion, and Luther found sweet lessons in the roaring lion of Satan. He wrote, "I did not learn to preach all at once. It was my temptation and my corruption that best prepared me for the pulpit. The devil has been my best professor of exegetical and experimental divinity. Before this great schoolmaster took me in hand, I was a sucking child and not a grown man. It was my combats with sin and with Satan that made me a true minister of the New Testament." The point is, don't even waste the devil's roar in your life. God works in all things for good with those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose.**

## **9. THE COLOSSAL IMAGE Based on Dan. 2:31-45**

**If we say something is big we assume we have said something important. If the grand stand is packed with the biggest crowd ever, this is a big deal, even if the game was not worth seeing. The big blast is all the rage on the screen or on the stage. Everything has to be gigantic to get our attention, for we are brainwashed into thinking that only the big is of real value. Hollywood never makes anything less than spectacular. Everything is advertised as bigger and better than ever. New terms have to be coined to keep up with the trend toward the idolatry of the big.**

**W. J. Bryan says, "There are three kinds of larceny-petty larceny, grand larceny, and glorious larceny. Glorious larceny is thieving on such a large scale that its brilliant success atones for its moral crookedness." When men worship bigness they care not if it be evil or good just so long as it is big. The little lie will be rejected, but Hitler proved that men will fall down and worship before the big lie. Booth Tarkington has put the prayer of modern man's idolatry into words:**

**Give me of Thyself, O Bigness,  
Power to get more Power;  
Riches to get more Riches;  
Give me Thy sweat to get more sweat.  
Give me of Thy Bigness to get more Bigness for myself.  
O Bigness, for Thine is the Power and the Glory,  
And there is no end but Bigness, forever and ever.**

**Man has really always been this way in his love for bigness. It is just that today he has greater opportunity and a greater variety of bigness. Nebuchadnezzar was a fanatic for bigness in his big city of Babylon with its mighty walls and tremendous temples. The ancient world went in for bigness in a big way. From the tower of Babel on man has tried to build something so big that it would be the wonder of the world and last forever. These Goliath works of man are always built on clay feet, however, and they crumble when struck by one stone aimed by one of God's Davids. This is what the dream of Nebuchadnezzar is all about. It is about the colossal kingdoms of men being demolished by the kingdom of God. A huge image of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay represents the 4 world empires from Nebuchadnezzar to the coming of Christ. Here is real bigness, for these 4 were the only 4 to ever rule the whole known world.**

**One of the amazing aspects of the book of Daniel is that it predicts that there would be only 4 such universal powers before**

**Christ, and then no more after His coming. History has confirmed this, for since the fall of the Roman Empire there has ever again been a nation that ruled the world. There have been great empires like the British on which the sun never set, but no king of England has ever been the king of the world. There were 4 universal kingdoms in a row and then no more. Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream gives us an outline view of history up to the coming of Christ. The stone of Christ brought all of the bigness crashing down into dust and His kingdom began to replace them by spreading into all the world to become the fifth and final universal kingdom built on a solid rock foundation, which would make it the only eternal kingdom that would never pass away.**

**The King said to his army, "Go into all the world and win men to my allegiance." Jesus, without force and destructive weapons, intended to build the greatest kingdom of all so that loyal subjects will bow to him as king out of every nation, tribe and language. Jesus thinks big also, but His bigness is based on growth and the winning of individuals one by one, and not the bigness gain by force like the kingdoms of the world. Force is faster, but it always has a foundation of clay that will bring it to destruction. The way of Christ is slow but sure, and His kingdom will have no end. This is a brief summary of the significance of the colossal image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.**

**This great image represented nations. It was common for ancient coins to contain human figures to represent the nation. We do it yet today when we use Uncle Sam to symbolize our nation. This image was so big and so bright that it was frightening even before Nebuchadnezzar knew what it meant. How much more frightening it must have been when he knew this giant statue would tumble and be demolished. Keble wrote,**

**In outline dim and vast**

**These fearful shadows cast,  
The giant forms of empire on their way  
To ruin; one by one  
They tower, and they are gone.**

**The head was of gold, and the arms and breasts of silver, and the belly and thighs of bronze, and the legs of iron, and the feet were of iron and clay mix. We see a downward trend in value from the head to the feet. Each material becoming of less worth as you descend. The biblical view of history places the golden age of the pagan world in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and from there on it was a downhill road to the coming of Christ. Daniel says that as Nebuchadnezzar beheld this great image a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it smote the image on those brittle feet of iron and clay, and like the walls of Jericho it came tumbling down.**

**Daniel goes on in verse 33 to say the whole thing with all of its metals was pounded until it was like powder so that wind carried it away. Total defeat of the evil kingdoms of men by the kingdom of God is what is illustrated. It is the total defeat of idolatry by true godliness. John the Baptist used this same illustration to describe the work of Christ in conquering the forces of evil. In Matt. 3:12 John says of Christ, "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the granary, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." In all of this imagery we see chaff represents the worthless things of life. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and to pound them to powder like Moses did with the golden calf, and to replace them with works of eternal value.**

**In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar we see in the miraculous stone's demolishing of the colossal image the triumph of the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of men. This stone becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. It starts small, but it begins with a bang, there**



**is a great victory and then it grows. Jesus said the kingdom of God was like a mustard seed, and though very small it becomes a great tree. So the little band of disciples that Jesus chose went out and turned the world upside down. This was the beginning of the last universal kingdom that would be eternal, and whose king would gain universal allegiance.**

**In verse 36 Daniel says, "I have told you the dream, and now I will interpret it." Knowing a thing and understanding it are two different things. Nebuchadnezzar's memory was restored, and he knew the dream as well as Daniel, but he still did not know what it meant. Knowing the Bible is good, but knowing what it means is far better. A true interpretation of ten verses is of more value than memorizing a hundred verses. Interpretation is the heart of Bible study. What does it mean ought to be the perpetual question in our minds just as it was the question in the mind of Nebuchadnezzar about his dream. Daniel knew the meaning, and that is what made him unique. Longfellow said,**

**Here at the portal thou dost stand,  
And with thy little hand  
Thou openest the mysterious gate  
Into the futures undiscovered land.**

**It was not Daniel's hand however, but the hand of God that opened this mysterious gate of the future. Daniel was only an instrument in God's hand. It is amazing how God will share His glory with man. In verse 37 Daniel calls Nebuchadnezzar king of kings. This is not just flattery, but it is a fact. He was the supreme king with many lesser kings paying tribute to him. Daniel had great respect for this totalitarian tyrant even though he took his own people captive and destroyed their holy city of Jerusalem. Others who were less keenly aware of God's providence might have spit in the face of Nebuchadnezzar, and then considered themselves glorious**

**martyrs as they were fed to the lions.**

**Daniel recognized that all the power and glory of Nebuchadnezzar was a gift from God. He was God's man even when God was not his God. Daniel's respect for the ruler of the land matches that of Peter and Paul in the New Testament who taught Christians to submit to and pray even for Nero. Even the authority of evil men is to be respected, for that authority is given them by God. Jesus said to Pilate that he would have no authority unless it was given to him from above. Men can abuse this authority, but they can also, even as unbelievers, wield their authority as God wills. Political power can be the instrument of doing God's will in the world, even when that power is in the hands of a dictator like Nebuchadnezzar.**

## **10. THE SHATTERING STONE Based on Dan. 2:44f**

**A man was bragging that he had saved the life of a poor half-starved little girl who was trying to sell wilted flowers on a freezing cold winter day. When asked how he explained: "This little girl was hardly dressed for the kind of weather she was facing. She wore no gloves, and in her hand she carried a few wilted flowers. She sought what shelter she could in an open doorway, and there I happen to see her as I passed along the street. Her lips were blue and her legs and arms were shaking noticeably. As I passed along she extended her hands with the flowers as a gesture asking me to buy them. I stopped and took out a dollar bill from my wallet. I said little girl what would you do if I gave you this dollar bill? 'Oh, gasped the freezing child. "I would be so happy I would die from joy." So I put the dollar bill back in my pocket and saved the poor girls life."**

**If you take the words of the little girl literally then he truly did save her life, for she said she would die if he gave her the bill. Such is the kind of nonsense that can result from taking all language literally. I was helping Lavonne set up a baby crib she needed for babysitting. When the frame was together and the spring was in she said, "Throw the mattress in before you go." So I picked it up and literally threw it in tearing a hole in the bottom in the process. Had she not told me to throw it in, it never would have happened. On the other hand, had I not taken her literally it never would have happened either. So often we expect people to get our point without interpreting everything literally.**

**We would die laughing if we knew all of the strange things that result from literalism. A tribe in Africa insists that men have two, four, six or eight wives because the Bible says be not unequally yoked. King James of England asked the famed poet Ben Jonson to name the gift he would like from the king. He jokingly replied, "A square foot of Westminster Abbey." The king took it literally, and when Jonson died he was buried in the Abbey standing up so that he would occupy only his requested square foot.**

**Controversy over many passages of Scripture centers around the whole issue of literalism. All Bible interpreters of evangelical belief follow the rule that the literal interpretation is the best except when it does not make sense, and is not consistent with the rest of Scripture. The traditional interpreters of Daniel feel that there is no meaningful way to be literal in the interpretation of this dream. The image of the dream represents Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. In spite of the fact that the first three of these pass from the scene of history they are shown to be destroyed at the same time as the last one when the stone of the kingdom of God strikes the image. There is no way to say that Babylon was literally destroyed at the coming of Christ. And the interpretation that it refers to the second coming will not work either, for Jesus will not destroy the literal**

**Babylon at that time. There is no way to escape the need for symbolic interpretation, and those who pretend they are being literal by putting the fulfillment off until the millennium are being intellectually dishonest.**

**Even if there was any evidence in this text for by-passing the incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and reign of Christ to jump to the millennium, there is no way to take verse 44 literally and maintain that it refers to the millennium. The kingdom referred to in this verse is clearly an eternal kingdom, which is to stand forever. The millennium only lasts for a thousand years, and how can a thousand year kingdom fulfill this kind of language about a kingdom that never ends? I can see the finite being used to symbolize the infinite, but not the infinite being used to symbolize the finite. A thousand year kingdom can be symbolic of an eternal kingdom, but it is senseless to use an eternal kingdom to be symbolic of one limited to a thousand years. Literalism here does not make sense. The traditional view takes this eternal kingdom to be the one announced by Jesus. It is that kingdom one must be born again to enter into, and which Jesus made synonymous with eternal life.**

**The traditional view is a literal view of the shattering stone's effect on these four kingdoms by recognizing the facts of history. These four universal kingdoms of men were a unity. They were four in a row with no long periods in between. All four of them came right in a row with one built upon the other. The literal facts of history are that with the breaking up of the Roman Empire that unity was shattered, and from that point on Christianity was the dominate power in the Western World. The first coming of Jesus Christ literally ended this series of universal empires.**

**Why have men not been satisfied with this, and why do they look for an even more literal fulfillment in the future? It is because the text says the stone smashes the image to dust. It utterly destroys**

**these kingdoms, and since Jesus did not do that in His first coming, they say He will fulfill it in His second coming. This demand for absolute literalism is sheer nonsense. What is being shattered by the stone representing Jesus? It is the image, which is a symbol of the kingdoms of men. The image is crushed to powder and blown away. Can we expect what happened to the symbols in the dream to happen literally to the nations they symbolize? This would lead to the literal pounding of the whole ancient world into dust and blowing it away leaving either a huge hole in the earth, or an ocean. If we distinguish between the symbol and the reality it symbolizes we avoid such literal nonsense.**

**Let's take a contemporary illustration to make the point clear. If somebody puts up a balloon to symbolize the President of the United States, and then takes a dart with vote written on it and throws it at the balloon exploding it to symbolize his belief that by voting we will put him out of office, it is not likely anyone would interpret this to mean he intended to assassinate the President. A dart happens to be a good way to break a symbolic balloon, and no one expects he will treat the literal President as he treats the symbol of him. Pulverizing into powder also happens to be an excellent way of getting rid of a symbolic statue, and it clearly reveals the fall of those nations symbolized, but it is foolish to expect that Jesus would have to literally go across that whole ancient world shattering the nations into powder to fulfill this prophecy. If by His coming their unity and world dominion are shattered, that is sufficient to fulfill what is being said in symbolic language.**

**To jump to the future in hopes of finding a more literal shattering of the kingdoms of men is foolish, for it destroys the unity of the image and limits the conquering Christ to an old world view. When He comes again He will come to a world far more vast than that which He conquered in His first coming. To try and limit the shattering effects of the second coming to the old world is silly.**

**There will be plenty of shattering to be done in the new world. If we stick to Daniel's reference to the first coming of Christ we will save ourselves much confusion. The spiritual victory of Christ over the kingdoms of men is illustrated with the language of the conquering warrior. How else can you speak of spiritual victories except in terms of physical warfare. It is not seeing this necessity that leads literalists to demand that Jesus be a literal warrior. The Jews did the same thing and expected the Messiah to literally conquer. When Jesus did not do that they rejected Him.**

**In the well known passage referring to the incarnation we read Isaiah 9:5-6 in the Berkeley Version, "For every tramping soldier's boot in the middle of the battle turmoil and every coat rolled in blood shall be buried-fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given; the government shall be upon His shoulder...." The first coming of Christ was to bring victory and peace, and yet Jesus never lifted a sword against Rome. And yet the New Testament insists that Jesus did fulfill these prophecies. He did succeed in setting the captives free on a universal scale. He did destroy the works of the devil, and He did ascend to the throne of David. To put all this off to the second coming is to ignore the whole New Testament. Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets, and this He did at His first coming.**

**The angel Gabriel came to Mary and said in Luke 1:31-33, "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His Father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Was Gabriel in his very announcement of the incarnation ignoring the consequences of it, and jumping ahead to the millennium? Not so, for Peter at Pentecost made it clear that Jesus took the throne of David in His ascension, and that He was both Lord and Christ. He fulfilled this prophecy of**

**Gabriel in His first coming, and thereby also fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel. The eternal kingdom is established and there is none other to establish in the future.**

**Jesus reigns now and is putting all enemies under His feet, and He is destroying all rule and authority that oppose Him. Those who ignore the whole New Testament teaching on the present reign of Christ, and who put all their stress on an obscure reign of the future imply that Jesus is presently a do nothing king. It is no wonder that they are historical pessimists who see no hope for a victory in time. That Jesus will come in power and great glory to conquer literally no Bible student can doubt, but that event should be considered in the many text that deal with it. To read it in where it doesn't fit not only adds to that picture what does not belong, but it takes away from the glory, power and results of the first coming of Christ.**

**That Daniel's prophecy refers to the first coming has all the evidence in its favor. Consider the reference to the stone again in verse 45. It is cut out without hands. There is no support for Jesus being a stone at His second coming, but the New Testament refers to Him s the stone, which the builders rejected, who became the chief cornerstone. Matthew Mark and Luke all refer to Jesus as the stone. Peter says so in Acts 4:11 and again in I Peter 2:7. Paul says so in Eph. 2:20. At the second coming Jesus is universal Lord and not a stone that grows into a mountain. This only fits the first coming. A text that confirms this beyond a doubt is Matt. 21:41,44 in the Berkeley Version, "Jesus said to them, did you never read in the Scriptures, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,...whoever falls on that stone will be smashed, and on whom it falls, he shall be pulverized."**

**In the words of Christ Himself we have it stated that He was a shattering stone in His first coming. When Daniel finished his interpretation the king fell on his face in worship before Daniel. It**

was not to idolize Daniel, but in honor of the God of Daniel who opened up the future to give him a glimpse. The king acknowledged Jehovah to be the supreme God. He made Daniel a ruler in Babylon, and Daniel immediately used his position to get his three friends into power. Thus ends the second chapter and immediate consequences of Daniel's interpretation of the future, which is in our past because the fulfillment of it came in the first coming of Jesus as the shattering stone.

## **11. PROPHETIC HISTORY Based on Dan. 2:38f**

When the judge asked the man why he parked in a no parking zone, the man replied that the sign said, "Fine for parking." Most of the mistakes made in life are due to false interpretation of words and symbols. We read into words what is not intended by their author. When Jesus said that He had meat to eat that they knew not of, His disciples thought He meant that He had gotten something to eat from some other source. Jesus was saying, however, that His meat was to do the will of His Father in heaven. Meat was being used to refer to soul food, and the drive and energy He received from doing God's will. They misunderstood Jesus also when He said they should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. He meant their teaching, but they thought He was talking about literal bread.

Nicodemus also jumped to an overly literal conclusion and wondered how one could enter again into his mother's womb and be born again. We could go on and show that within the Bible itself there are many misunderstandings because of improper interpretation of language. Interpretation is important, for one does not really know what words mean until he interprets them so as to



**understand the message their author meant to communicate. Sometimes words can mean several different things, and only the context can make it clear which is the true meaning. For example, the sign that said, "Fine for parking," on a public street will mean there is a penalty for parking there. If you send a group on ahead to select some good camp sights in the woods and you come upon a sign tacked to a tree which says, "Fine for parking," you can be assured that in that context it means this is a good spot to park. The very same words convey opposite meanings, for in one context they say don't park here, and in another context they say do park here.**

**The Bible is probably the most misunderstood book in the world, and Daniel is one the most likely books to be misinterpreted. Figurative, symbolic and imprecise language lends itself to all kinds of subjective speculation. Men seek to mold such language into a variety of systems, and they interpret this book on the basis of preconceived ideas. Some say this dream was fulfilled before Christ; some say at the time of the first coming, and others say at the time of the second coming. Someone has to be reading in subjective feelings and speculation. How can we be sure that we are getting the message of Daniel and not some subjective message of other men?**

**We must keep the court open and put every author on trial. We must listen to and examine the evidence. This means we must approach the study of difficult parts of the Bible like a jury. Since godly men differ very sincerely, just as two eyewitnesses may differ on their interpretation of an event, we must continuously weigh the evidence and be on the lookout for fallacies and unsupported assertions. It is so easy to slip in and idea here and there which is not in the text, but only in the mind of the interpreter. If we are aware of the dangers, and approach with a critical and cautious attitude we may not understand everything, but we will avoid a great many misunderstandings. The conclusion we come to on this dream determines our whole outlook on the rest of the book. If we**

**misunderstand here, all of the rest will be out of line as well. If we understand this the rest will fall into place.**

**In verse 38 Daniel says very clearly that the head of gold on the great image represents Nebuchadnezzar himself. All agree here, for it is too plain to dispute. No kingdom had so much gold as Babylon. All interpreters begin at the same point, but as move along they begin to digress, and by the time we come to the feet of the image they are miles and ages apart.**

**In verse 39 Daniel says that after you shall come another kingdom inferior to you. This inferior kingdom is represented by silver. The vast majority of interpreters agree that this kingdom is the Medo-Persian kingdom. Both sacred and secular history record that Cyrus conquered Babylon. He first conquered all of the East except Babylon. The people of this great city went within the vast walls of it and laughed at the Medes and Persians. They had provisions for 20 years and had enough land to raise crops within the city walls. They were, by all human calculations, secure and they slept in peace.**

**Beltshazzar the king ignored the fact that his city was under siege. He had a big feast and drinking party. This is recorded in chapter 5. Secular history tells us how Cyrus took advantage of their over confidence. He had his soldiers divert the water of the river running through the city. When the water was low he had soldiers on both ends of the city enter under the walls in the riverbed. They were able to kill the guards and the king. In their careless presumption the Babylonians went to bed a free people, and they woke up as slaves of the Persians. In 517 B. C. they rebelled and Darius the Persian king destroyed the gates of the city and tore down the walls from 200 down to 50 cubits. This marked the beginning of the destruction of Babylon. Alexandria the Great tried to restore the city, but after employing 10 thousand men for 2 months in clearing**

away the rubbish he died, and the work ceased.

In 294 B. C. Seleucus Nicator built the new Babylon in the neighborhood of the old city. He used much material from the old city, but the old city was left in ruins, and to this day has been inhabited only by wild beasts. Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel did not know all these details of the fall and ruin of Babylon. They had only a prophetic outline whereas we have a detailed history because we live after the event. The only disagreement in this second kingdom is with those who feel Daniel also lived after the events described here, and so they make the second kingdom refer to the Medes only, and the third kingdom they say is the Persians, and then the fourth is the Greeks, and so they make it possible for the whole thing to have been written around 168 B. C., and so they eliminate the prophetic nature of it. This is the liberal interpretation of the book that rejects Daniel as the author. There is no basis for the division of the Medes and Persians into two different kingdoms. The law of the Medes and Persians referred to in Daniel indicates they were one kingdom, and the only reason any doubt it is because they want to get through these four kingdoms as to end with the Greeks rather than the Romans. The evidence plus the authority of history, however, assures us that his second kingdom was the Medo-Persian kingdom.

Then Daniel says a third kingdom shall rule over all the earth. Again the majority of interpreters agree that this is the great kingdom of Alexander the Great, or the Greek kingdom. He conquered the whole known world, and his kingdom is represented by the bronze. Homer in the Odyssey refers to "The bronze quoted Greeks." Some of the well-known battles of history took place between the silver kingdom of the Persians and the bronze kingdom of the Greeks. Salamis, Thermopylae, and Marathon will recall memories to those who have studied Greek history. The Persian empire was famous for its colossal defeats and foolish adventures. Daniel says the second kingdom was inferior to Babylon, and it truly

**was both in glory and in wisdom. In 3:31 ten Persian kings faced Alexander the Great and were defeated, and thus ended the silver kingdom.**

**Josephus has an interesting sidelight on history at this point. Alexander the Great became angry at the Jews when they would not supply his men with provisions, but remained loyal to Darius the Persian. He marched on Jerusalem with the intent to destroy it. Jaddua the high priest went out to meet him in a procession of priests and other people dressed in white. Alexander was so impressed that he spared the city. Jaddua showed him the prophecies of Daniel that indicated he would conquer the Persians. Alexander offered sacrifice and granted the Jews freedom. Alexander did not destroy Jerusalem as most conquerors did. He did much good in the world, and he spread Greek culture everywhere. He was foolish, however, and drank so heavily that he killed his friend in a frenzy of drunkenness. He was seized with a violent fever and died 11 days later on June 13, 323 B. C. at the age of 32. His kingdom was divided and became weaker and weaker until swallowed up by the Romans.**

**In verse 40 Daniel refers to the fourth and last kingdom, which was the kingdom of iron. Except for those who end with the Greeks, this has always been thought to be the Roman Empire. Some feel that since the Roman Empire was not destroyed by the coming of Christ it has to be that the fourth is the Greek kingdom. This is meaningless for Jesus came after the Greek kingdom was gone, and so His coming did not destroy it anymore than it did the Roman Empire. Dispensationalists feel they have discovered a solution of how to maintain an absolute literalism. They say that in the last days there will be a revival of the Roman Empire that will be literally destroyed at the second coming of Christ. This is a solution that has no basis and only adds more problems.**

**The image is a unity, and one kingdom leads to another. It is no**

**accident that the traditional interpretation, which has been the view of the church through all the centuries, takes these four kingdoms to be the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman. History supports this view and no other. If we tamper with this unity and skip great ages we need to have good reason to support that this is what God intended to convey to Nebuchadnezzar, and that this is what Daniel intended in his interpretation. Our task will be to show that keeping the unity leads to a logical and sensible interpretation of Daniel's words.**

## **12. OLD OR NEW Based on Dan. 2:41f**

**The city building inspector of Paso Robles, Calif. declared the old furnace in a Mennonite church to be faulty. It had served them well for many years, but the church officials installed a new furnace. Shortly after it was installed the church burned to the ground. A faulty furnace was listed as the cause of the blaze. There is no guarantee that the new will be better than the old even on the physical level. This is even more true on the level of thought. One man said after reading the latest book, "What is new in it is not true, and what is true in it is not new." This is certainly the case in the realm of theology.**

**This is not to say that there is nothing new under the sun, for there are always new applications of old truths. We are not to be blind to the new like the Pharisees and feel that all that is not traditional is heresy. Since we do not fully understand all of the implications of the old, just as they did not understand all the implications of Old Testament prophecy, we are to give all new ideas an honest hearing. On the other hand, we dare not be like the Athenians either, for they spent their time in nothing else but either**

**to tell or hear some new thing. This is the mentality of our modern mind. People are crying for the new not because the old has failed, but because they know nothing about the old, and they have no foundation.**

**We do have a foundation as Christians. Christ is our rock, and the Bible is our anchor, and we have a whole history of interpretation to build on. When it comes to difficult places of interpretation we cannot afford to dismiss this history and launch off into a new interpretation unless we can clearly demonstrate that the new is superior and has the evidence in its favor. For example, the orthodox or traditional interpretation of Daniel 2 has been held to by Josephus, the majority of the early church fathers, all expositors through the middle ages, and the majority of modern expositors. In spite of this impressive list for its support I would not hesitate to depart from them and adopt a new view if the evidence was clear that they were wrong. Since I have not seen any such evidence I will continue in the line of the old and expound Daniel according to the traditional view, and seek to show that the new has no right to claim our allegiance.**

**In verse 41 Daniel says that the Roman Empire will be divided as symbolized both by the two legs and feet of the image, and by the fact of the iron and clay being mixed. The kingdom is solid iron in the legs, and so it was powerful at its beginning, but later it gets weak due to foreign elements that divide its unity and its strength. Mud just won't mix with metal. Nothing is easier than to show that the intrusion of the barbarians on the one side and the Arabs and Turks on the other was the cause for the break down of the unity and strength of the Roman Empire.**

**At this point we have to consider an important new idea brought in by the Dispensational interpretation. They take these ten toes of the image and say that they represent ten kings or kingdoms that**

**shall arise in the last days as a revived Roman Empire. This is an assumption with no basis in the text. In fact, the text refutes the assumption. The toes are mentioned in both verses 41-42 as part of the single fourth kingdom, and they are used to illustrate it as being part strong and part broken. There is not the slightest hint that they represent ten different kingdoms into which the Roman Empire divided. Let alone referring to ten such kingdoms arising centuries after the collapse of Rome.**

**It would certainly be impossible to guess that they might stand for such a thing unless somebody told you, and even then it would take a great deal of faith in the person's insight to believe he could see that interpretation in the words of Daniel. It is not worth the gamble to impose such an unfounded interpretation upon Daniel, for God will not hold us guiltless if we add to His Word what is not there. If one is only interested in being new and different, then these ten toes take on all kinds of possibilities. For example, the anti-sports Christian could see the ten toes of iron and clay as symbolizing athlete's foot, and so conclude that Rome fell because of an over emphasis on sports. There would be a measure of truth in this view, and it would allow them to lament over the craze there is in sports today as a sign of the times.**

**There is no end to what can be done with a little imagination, but if you are interested in what Daniel intended to communicate then we are limited to taking his words as they are, and he says the ten toes and feet mixed with iron and clay are to symbolize that the fourth kingdom was divided, and was both strong and weak. The traditional view sees what history later confirmed, and that is that the mixing and intermarriage with the Huns, Goths and Vandals led to disunity and the breakdown in marriage and family, and this contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire. This old view is the best I have found, and it best fits the remainder of the interpretation of this book.**

**In verse 44 Daniel says that in the days of those kings, that is in the days represented by the kingdoms he has just mentioned, and specifically the fourth kingdom of Rome. This is the typical way of Jewish literature to represent a period. The book of Ruth opens, "In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land..." This does not mean famine all through the days of the Judges, but simply refers to that era of history. So here he is saying that in the days of this unique series of universal kings God is going to break into history with His kingdom. This means that the Kingdom of God entered history during the time of the fourth kingdom, and if we are correct that this was Rome, then it follows that God set up this Kingdom when he sent His Son to earth to be born and became incarnate in human flesh during the reign of Caesar Augustus.**

**The Dispensational view skips this event and says Daniel's prophecy looks to the second coming of Christ rather than to the first coming. They say there were not ten kings when Jesus came the first time and so the literal interpretation demands that we look to the second coming for the fulfillment of this prophecy. This is a rejection of what Jesus said when He declared that the Kingdom of God was at hand. The Kingdom was the theme of most of His parables and is the basic theme of the whole New Testament. It is inconceivable that God is revealing what is ahead and He skips the most important event in human history, which is the incarnation and life of Jesus. This is the central event of Old Testament prophecy. The kingdom that last forever began with the coming of Jesus. Those who put this off to the second coming diminish the present glory of Christ.**

**This issue here is over which coming we are to give the most emphasis to as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. The orthodox view puts the focus on the first coming, and it exalts Jesus in His present status at the right hand of the Father where he reigns until all enemies are put under His feet.**



### **13. INSTANT IDOLATRY Based on Dan. 3:1-8**

**Alfred North Whitehead said, "The key note of idolatry is contentment with the prevalent gods." Nebuchadnezzar, as we saw in the conclusion of chapter 2, had been convinced that Jehovah was the God of gods. Even after this, however, he did not feel compelled to forsake his lesser gods. Like many Oriental people today he added the true God to his collection and went on in his allegiance to his old gods. Here in chapter 3 we see him setting up an idol of gold to be worshipped.**

**Commentators disagree as to how to interpret this idolatry. Dr. Gill says it was due to his pride. In the dream and interpretation of chapter 2 he was the head of gold, but he was going to do better than that and be the whole image of gold. The image represents himself, and it is his attempt to outwit the dream and make himself superior. Whether or not he felt this image represented himself we do not know, but we do know he was very serious about it being worshipped, for he threatens immediate death to all who would bow to it. whatever his motive he is determined to get all to worship his golden image. It meant a great deal to him.**

**Joseph Seiss takes an opposite view of the matter. He says the king is to be congratulated here for this noble act of reverence. He says Nebuchadnezzar is building this image as a memorial of the dream God gave him so as to never forget. The purpose then is to glorify the God of heaven and not to detract from Him. It is wonderful to be able to see such a noble motive, but the evidence is opposed to this optimistic view. If it was true that he was honoring Jehovah, why would the whole chapter be about the opposition of God's men to the whole thing? In verse 18 they say they will not**

**serve his gods or worship the golden image. It is flying in the face of the facts to suppose Nebuchadnezzar is doing anything here but demanding idolatrous worship. It helps to know that chapter 3 does not come immediately after chapter 2 in time. Nebuchadnezzar is not to be pictured as getting up the next day and ordering the image to be set up.**

**Since chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar has been to Jerusalem and has destroyed the city, and so this is 19 years later. Possibly he is now no longer impressed with the God of the Jews whose city he has destroyed. He is feeling very supreme himself, and he says to the 3 Jewish friends in verse 15, "And who is the God that will deliver you out of my hands?" If the God of the Jews could not deliver them in their holy city, He will certainly be no threat in Babylon is what he was thinking. Nebuchadnezzar had lost the impression he had when the dream was interpreted. He settled back into his contentment with the gods of Babylon. He was in the same frame of mind as king Robert of Sicily. He heard the words of Scripture being chanted by some priest. They were saying, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." His scornful response of pride was-**

**Tis well that such seditious words are sung  
Only by priests in the Latin tongue,  
For unto priests and people be it known,  
There is no power can push me from my throne.**

**It was in this spirit that Nebuchadnezzar raised his 90 foot high golden image and expected all to bow down. Even if it did not represent him, his ego was directly involved. We get an idea of his attitude from the famous India House Inscription in which he tells us how he renovated two great temples and built many others. Of one of his palaces he says, "That house, for admiration I made it, for the beholding of the hosts of men I filled it with magnificence.**

**Awe-inspiring glory, and dread of the splendor of my sovereignty encompass it round about; the evil, unrighteous man cometh not within it." He came very near to playing God with his great power.**

**Verse 2 says that he called all the officials together for the dedication of his image. A tyrant always has a good crowd at his formalities. It is a matter of survival to attend such a function. Daniel is not present at this ceremony, and was likely on a trip of some important government business. His three friends, who were lesser officials, were not so fortunate, and they were forced into a showdown. They had survived all these years as servants in a pagan government, but now they faced a test of loyalty between God and their government. No free man could tolerate the demands of Nebuchadnezzar. He denied religious liberty and demanded worship of his idol or else. This would be no problem for most of the officials, for they could worship another god without denying their own god. There was no inconsistency for them. It was just a matter of common courtesy that you honored the gods of the area you were in.**

**It was a different story for the Jews, however, for their God forbid the recognition of all the false gods of men. Idolatry was a serious sin of disloyalty, and so they were really in a bind. They were government officials performing useful service in the government for years. They had not had to compromise their loyalty in serving pagan people in this way, but now their loyalty is being challenged. Will they bow to a false god to hold their office and to stay alive? Will they compromise their faith to hold on to the good life they had, or will they risk it all by being loyal to their Lord? The fact that they lasted this long shows that a believer can be a good politician in an unbelieving society. Sooner or later, however, they were run into a conflict of interest and be forced to choose between loyalty to the state, or to God. In a government like that of Babylon the danger was even greater, for there was no separation of church and state.**

**In America no government official could be compelled by decree to bow down to any idol. If such ever came to be the case Christians would have to defy the government in loyalty to God. This incident in Babylon shows us that Christians are justified in getting involved in politics, but also in resisting a government that compels obedience to what is contrary to the will of God. This means that groups that have nothing to do with government, and those who say my country right or wrong are both without biblical support. The biblical position is to do all that is possible that is consistent with God's will, and to resist all that is contrary to His revelation.**

**In verses 4 and 5 the herald explained what was expected at the sound of the instruments. Times have not changed that much. Here is your typical gathering of dignitaries being instructed as to what to do when the band begins the program. Music plays a major role in all the affairs of men. This is true in all lands and religions. The Babylonians had a very musical nature. Monuments have been found with musicians playing instruments. Here is an impressive list of instruments they used. Music unites people behind a common cause. Every nation has its patriotic music to unite its people. The role of music in nationalism is essential. The onward march of Christianity has also been in step to the great hymns of the cross. Many feel that political unity was the goal that Nebuchadnezzar had in mind here.**

**Verse 6 says that the ones not falling down at the commencement of the music would be given a free cremation at government expense. It was bow or burn with no waiting. Burning was the typical method of capital punishment in Babylon. In Jer. 29:22 we read, "The Lord make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire." Nebuchadnezzar had little compassion, and when he said you will roast you can count on roasting. Verse 7 shows that the officials were well aware of this, for as soon as the music began they all fell down immediately. Here was instant**

**idolatry. Sound the music and in a moment they were all idolaters. This scheme for instant idolatry did not work on everyone, for the 3 Jewish friends were not interested in it, or even in a slower version of it.**

**Verse 8 shows that some of the Chaldeans were glad they refused to bow, for they despised these foreigners coming in as mere captives and rising to positions of political power. Here was their chance to get rid of them, and so they maliciously charged them before the king. Now the book of Daniel clearly states that Nebuchadnezzar is in power by the will of God, and all his glory is the gift of God. He is God's man in God's appointed place. Nevertheless, if that power is used unjustly it is to be defied. It is better to be guilty of treason to your king than to be a traitor to your God. No power on earth has the right to command a man's conscience concerning his ultimate loyalty.**

**The separation of church and state is of the very essence of our success as a free nation. No nation can long remain free where the state has the power to determine a man's ultimate loyalty. God never intended the state to exercise this power. Man is to be free to determine who will be his God. It would be wrong even for a Christian dictator to force people to worship the true God. Where freedom is allowed the Gospel will compete with all other values for man's loyalty. What is surprising is that many Christians believe Jesus is going to do the very thing that is condemned in all others. They believe He will set up a kingdom where men will be compelled by force to be loyal to Him. I see no biblical basis for this. When every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord it will be due to inescapable conviction, for when Christ comes again in great power and glory no one will be able to doubt His deity.**

**There will no one in hell including the devil himself who will doubt the Lordship of Christ, but none will be forced to love Him or**

be loyal to Him. They will be free to curse Him for all eternity. If force was justified Jesus would be obligated to force all to repent and be saved. What is evil in Nebuchadnezzar in his demand for instant idolatry ought not to be attributed to the King of Kings, for this makes might right, and if might alone determines right, then this demand for instant idolatry would be right, but it clearly is not. In our next study we will consider the consequences of three Jews not joining in on this instant idolatry.

#### **14. ABSOLUTE LOYALTY Based on Dan. 3:8-18**

The warden asked the prisoner if there was anything he would like to eat before the execution. He said, "Yes, I would like mushrooms. I've always been scared to try them for fear I'd be poisoned." Here was a man who was brave because he had nothing to lose. This is all together different from that bravery that acts even when there is everything to lose. This last kind of bravery we see in the 3 Jewish friends. They stood erect when the law of the king was-bow or burn. They deliberately disobeyed the highest law of the land. They refused to conform to the orders of Nebuchadnezzar even though they knew the envious eyes of their enemies would see and report them. They were fully aware of the demand and the penalty, and that they would be found guilty. And yet they refused to bow, for they were conscience of being watched by greater eyes than those of their enemies.

A little boy wrote an essay on bravery, and in it he said, "Some boys is brave because they always play with little boys, and some boys is brave because their legs is too short to run away, but most boys is brave because somebody's lookin." In spite of his poor grammar he had a good grasp of the motivating power of the

**presence of someone loved and respected. A child will take real risks and attempt feats of bravery when he knows he is being watched. So it is also for a child of God. Assurance of God's presence and His all seeing eyes upon you gives courage to face any task, and reject any temptation. The major cause for the fluctuation in the Christian life is the variation in our awareness of the presence of God.**

**When God is near we cast our fear, and we fight with zeal and joy, but when he's not we're a sorry lot to be in His employ. The sense of God's presence is a key to victorious living. These three Jewish officials in a foreign land were surrounded by idolatry, and yet they were deeply aware of the presence of Jehovah. Their faith was visibly confirmed by God when he actually became visible with them in the fiery furnace. It was their awareness of somebody looking, as the little boy said, that made these men so brave, and that someone was the Lord. This is what enabled them to be non-conformist when it cost. They were willing to risk every value in life and life itself for the value of loyalty to God. As might be expected Nebuchadnezzar was not impressed with their loyalty, for to him it was an act of disloyalty. When the informer told him of their refusal to bow to his idol he went into a royal rage and ordered them to be brought to him immediately.**

**It took awhile for them to be brought to him, and it gave him time to calm down. He could have had them thrown into the fire without a hearing, but he gave them a chance to speak for themselves. In verse 15 we see him giving them another chance to bow and be spared. Opportunity to disobey God never knocks only once. What was a generous chance to gain mercy from Nebuchadnezzar's point of view was only a temptation to the 3 Jews. Here they were in the presence of the most powerful man on earth, and they knew he would not hesitate to destroy them if they defy him. Nebuchadnezzar wanted 100% loyalty, and he was determined to get it by burning all who would not obey him.**

**It would have been the most natural human thing to do to rationalize your way out of this dilemma. After all, they could have argued that if we bow and live we will be in a better position to be servants of God and the Jewish people than if we are dead. Certainly just this once could not hurt that much. It would be just one bow and they would be free, for they had the king's word. He was trying to be fair about the whole thing, and so maybe we should go along with him just his once. Whether or not they had any such thoughts we do not know, but these would be the perfectly normal rationalizations that would tempt the believer to give in and forsake his position of absolute loyalty.**

**In verse 16 we see their response to this offer. In the Amplified Version it says, "It is not necessary for us to answer you on this point." There was no quibbling or hesitation. They made it clear to the king that his treats had no power over them. They had made up their minds to be loyal to God and nothing could alter their determination. They were not afraid of death as much as they were afraid to depart from the path of duty and loyalty to God. They felt it would be futile to defend themselves. There are occasions when defense is useless and silence is proper. Jesus said by His silence before Pilate, "I do not need to answer you in this matter." A believer never needs to defend his loyalty to God. The king would not find their defense intelligible anyway, and so it would be casting perils before swine. When men have no concept of absolute loyalty to a supreme God it is futile to try and convince them of its value. Our duty is to be loyal to God regardless of its offense to men.**

**In other matters of state they were loyal to the king, and they were obligated to give answer to him, but in their relationship to God they had no need to answer him or anyone else. In this matter they said they had no need to speak to him at all. We have here a clear example of the principle that Jesus laid down when He said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things**



**that are Gods." These three Jews had given the king their loyalty and service in all matters of government, but now that he is asking for them to render to him the loyalty that belongs to God alone, they refused. They are captives, but they are free also, for no power can take away the freedom of a man to be absolutely loyal to God.**

**Absolute loyalty is extremely rare because the cost can be extremely high. It is possible for all, however, because no one is really ever compelled to be disloyal to God. The will is always involved. These three had no fear, for they were assured that God was able to deliver them, and even if He did not, they would go down with the ship of loyalty rather than bow to a false God under pressure. Lincoln said in 1839, "Many free countries have lost their liberty, and ours may lose hers, but if she shall, be it my proudest plume, not that I was the last to desert, but that I never deserted her." Lincoln's loyalty to liberty was not conditioned. He didn't fight for it only as long as it was easy, but even unto death. This is the kind of loyalty that makes great men. In Rev. 2:10 Jesus says, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life." Absolute loyalty is the ideal toward which all believers are to aim. God is able to deliver is to be our constant theme. These three Jews had many examples of God's deliverance in the past to assure them, and we have even more. The poet has recorded a partial list.**

**Rescue him, or Lord, in this his evil hour,  
As of old so many buy Thy mighty power:  
Enoch and Elisa from the common doom;  
Noah from the waters in a saving poem;  
Abraham from the abounding guilt of heathenesse;  
Job from all his multiform and fell distress;  
Isaac, when his father's knife was raised to slay;  
Lot from burning Sodom on its judgment day;  
Moses from the land of bondage and despair;  
Daniel from the hungry lions in their lair;**

**David from the Goliath;  
And the wrath of Saul;  
And the two-Apostles from their prison-thrall.**

**They had much evidence of God being able to deliver, and yet they did not presume to demand such deliverance. They did not know for sure that He would deliver them. God's ways were above theirs and they knew that God's men can also perish for being loyal, and so they made it clear that even if God does not deliver them it does not alter their stand. Like Job they say, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him." This is where their absolute loyalty really shines. A loyalty that does not depend upon conditions is an unconditional commitment. This is what gives a Christian courage and determination. Bunyan wrote, "I am going on, sink or swim, come heaven, come hell, Lord Jesus catch me if Thou wilt, but if not, I will venture in Thy name." There are mysteries we cannot understand, and we must often suffer for reasons we know not why, but the only road to travel that will enable us to arrive in glory at last is the road of absolute loyalty.**

## **15. OBJECTIVE OMNIPOTENCE   Based on Dan. 3:19f**

**R. L. Stevenson has written a story concerning an old sea rover. A youth came rushing to him from the scene of a tragedy, which seemed about to doom his city. He shouted that the temple was burning and that their god Thor was being destroyed in the fire. "Hurry! Hurry! If you would escape," he cried. The old rover hesitated a moment, and then he took his battle axe off his shoulder and rubbed his thumb along the edge. He then headed for the city. "Where are you going?" cried the frightened youth. He shouted back, "I'm going back to die with God."**

**There is much amazing loyalty to false gods in this world. Many are even willing to die for their powerless deities and helpless idols. The unique and exclusive nature of biblical religion does not consist in faith and loyalty, for those devoted to error can match this devotion. It consists in the object in which the believer puts his faith, and specifically the almighty God who is objectively able to deliver.**

**On the level of the subjective there are pagans who have experiences of a spiritual nature that surpass those of the average Christian. The LSD user has subjective visions and feelings we cannot match. We are deceived if we think the believer is always more secure and happy on the subjective level than the unbeliever. This is false, for at any one point in time there are some pagans more content and happy than Christians. And there are pagans being more loyal and faithful to their superstitions than some Christians are to Christ. The believer who puts his trust and hope in subjective feelings will be tossed about by the facts and circumstances of life.**

**A faith that will endure and conquer all the storms must be a faith based on objective reality. Our assurance is never to be in how we feel. It must be in the objective reality of an omnipotent God who loves us and who will deliver us from evil eternally, even if not from all temporal evil. If you look at this scene of the three Jews defying the king, you see the loyalty of men to the true God facing the loyalty of a man to a false god. It appears to be a draw, and neither of them are going to give an inch. The king was just as loyal to his idol as they were to Jehovah. He refused to compromise and let them get by with refusing to respect his god. If it is only determination and loyalty that we are going to admire, the king is as much an example as the three Jews.**

**The point we want to make here is that the whole issue revolves around the objective reality of God, and not the subjective faith of men. Like all passages of Scripture where you can exalt the**

**greatness of men in their loyalty to God, this one makes it clear that all such loyalty would be futile apart from God's objective reality and omnipotence. In other words, here, as everywhere, all the glory belongs to God. The faith of these three Jews was only superior to that of the king because the God in whom they put their faith was real and able to deliver. The value of being aware of this is that it keeps us from denying the reality of other men's faith and loyalty. We have no reason to say that other people are not as faithful and loyal as we are. We ought not to reject the possibility of unbelievers having a great devotion to some idol, or other value they consider ultimate.**

**The Bible does not say that men cannot have faith in other gods. It stresses the truth that there is only one God we must have faith in, for He alone can deliver us from sin and all of its consequences, for He alone has objective omnipotence. We are not to compare and match our subjective experiences with others, but we are to match our God with theirs. Our only hope rests in the objective reality of God, and not in our subjective faith or feelings. These change, but God does not change. This alone can keep us optimistic regardless of circumstances. When we are a persecuted minority like these three Jews in a pagan land, and when we are forced into the flames by the tyranny of intolerance, as they were, our help and hope will not be in our feelings, but in the reality of God's ability to deliver.**

**These three Jews demonstrate their faith in the objective reality of an omnipotent God by saying that if He does not deliver us we will still not bow to another God and desert Him. They knew that death could not separate them from God, and so they were prepared to die. In verse 19 we see the fury of the tyrant at not being able by threats to control the loyalty of men. His anger, like most anger, led to no good. He foolishly ordered the furnace to be heated 7 times hotter than usual, and by so doing he killed some of his own men. There is no logic in his anger. The hotter fire could not make their death**

more miserable, but rather more merciful. A slow burning would have been torment, but instant death would be a blessing in comparison.

His men might have thought of that, but they were not about to risk giving him any advice at this point. Those who through them into the furnace did not have a chance, for had they refused, they would have been thrown in anyway. There is no way to win against a tyrant in anger unless God intervenes, and this is what we see in verses 24-25. God gave a promise to Israel in Isa. 43:2: "When you pass through the waters I will be with you...When you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flames shall not consume you." This was certainly the case here, for the flames were so hot they killed the men who threw them in, but they survived without being scorched. All the flame did was burn away the material that bound them, for they were free and were walking around in the fire.

The king was shocked to see 4 rather than just 3, and he even asked his counselors if there were 3 to be sure. There is much debate as to what he saw, and who it was that he saw. He said that the appearance of the 4th was like a son of the gods. The KJV would suggest by its capital on Son and God that this was Jesus Christ. Many commentators going back to Augustine have felt that this was a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ. There is nothing impossible about this interpretation, and a study of the Angel of the Lord makes it even likely. Modern versions convey the mind of the king, and he knew nothing of Jesus, and neither did the three Jews. To them the 4th person would be an angel of God, and the king says in verse 28 that it was an angel that God sent to deliver His servants. This fits the knowledge of both the king and the three Jews, and the ministry of angels. It could have been any angel, but it also could have been the Angel of the Lord, who was a pre-incarnate Christ.

The appearance of the 4th man was to make it clear to the king

**that the deliverance was of God and not by any trick of man. He got the point, and now was ready to concede the victory to their God. He says, "Blessed be the God of Shadrack, Meshack and Abed-nego who set at naught the kings command." He said they would die, but God said they would live. God overruled him, and he was ready to admit it and call their God the Most High God. He said that there is none other who is able to deliver in that way. The king is persuaded to acknowledge Jehovah to be the highest God. He did not yet reject all others, but he put Jehovah first, and decreed that no one dare speak against Him. This would give the Jews a greater status in society because their God would be honored.**

**The king was more positive in his relationship to the three Jews than to God, for he gave them a promotion. What a revolting development this was for the men who informed on them in hope of getting them to be destroyed. Now they are given greater positions and power. They also gained religious liberty, for they would not be expected ever again to have to prove their loyalty by bowing to an idol. Not all stories of defiance of authority have such a happy ending, but regardless of the temporal consequences a believer in an objective omnipotent God must be loyal to Him whatever the cost.**

## **16. FROM INSANE TO HUMANE Based on Dan. 3:28-4:3**

**It is surprising, and even shocking, that the greatest hero of Saddam Hussain, the ruler of Iraq, was one who wrote part of the Bible. Nebuchadnezzar is a familiar name to students of the Bible, but few realize that he was one of the authors of the Bible. Here in chapter 4 of Daniel we see clearly that this is one of his letters and his personal testimony. Someone had to write it down for him, but these are his words.**

**Nebuchadnezzar is the most prominent heathen monarch referred to in the Bible, and the most important. The prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and the last chapters of Kings and Chronicles center around the life of this great man. There are many of the great people of God who do not get a fraction of the coverage that he gets in the Bible. He is named 86 times in the Bible. He reigned for 43 years and died in 594 B.C. at the age of 84. His capital was Babylon just about 100 miles from Baghdad, the present capital of Iraq.**

**This area of the world seems like an insignificant place to us in the West, but there are few places on earth with such a rich heritage of history. The area of Iraq where the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers come together is considered the most likely place where man began his history, for this is where the Garden of Eden was according to the best guesses. The oldest organized states are to be found in this area, and it was not far from this area that Abraham was called to become the father of God's people. He is the most honored man in all of history, and he came from this area.**

**This area was called Mesopotamia, and some of the world's most famous people ruled here. Hammurabi, the great ancient lawgiver, ruled here in 1700 B. C. When Nebuchadnezzar came to power in the 600's he was used of God to punish His people. He came to Jerusalem and destroyed the temple, and he carried Israel into captivity to Babylon. There was no help for Israel, for Nebuchadnezzar had defeated all his foes, and even Syria and Egypt came under his power. With relative peace he gave himself to become a great builder in beautifying his capital of Babylon. His hanging gardens were one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world.**

**Daniel was taken captive along with most of Israel, and they lived for 70 years in Babylon until the Persians conquered Babylon and Cyrus the Great let the Jews go back to Israel. A lot of what we**

**have seen in our day is due to the heritage of Iran and Iraq. The leaders of these nations have a noble heritage, and in their pride they feel they can recapture the glory of Bible days, and again be world powers. Saddam Hussain is rebuilding Babylon and trying to make his nation the center of power, glory and luxury. Every year he stages a festival in Babylon. He mints a special gold coin with face on one side and that of Nebuchadnezzar on the other.**

**The study of Babylon is fascinating, for there are hundreds of references to Babylon in the Bible. Peter even refers to a church there in I Peter 5:13. The tomb of the prophet Ezekiel is not far outside of Babylon. But in the book of Revelation it becomes a symbol of the evil power of the world that is judged by God. Babylon The Great is fallen, and it represents the lost just as Jerusalem represents the redeemed. I do not pretend to be a prophecy expert, but the fact is, if a war breaks out in the cities of Babylon and Jerusalem it could be a rehearsal for the final battle. But we want to focus on the record of Nebuchadnezzar who reigned over ancient Babylon.**

**All of the bricks dug up from the ruins of ancient Babylon, and a hundred other towns in the neighborhood of Bagdad have no other name on them but that of Nebuchadnezzar. Here in 4:30 Nebuchadnezzar says, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" The Jewish and Greek historians agree that he was more celebrated then was Hercules among the Greeks. He was brilliant, powerful, and very religious. He built more temples than any other ruler.**

**He was the king who built the 90-foot image of gold, and he threw Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego into the fiery furnace for not bowing to it. He is one of the few kings who saw a miracle of God when a fourth man appeared in the fire and the 3 came out without a**



hair singed. He was so deeply impressed by this miracle that he praised their God, and he made a decree that exalted God, and he promoted the 3 Jews to higher positions so that it was a truly happy ending.

Here are the words of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 3:28-29: "Then Nebuchadnezzar said, praise be to the God of Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way." This heathen king with gods galore makes it a capital crime to say a negative word about the God of Israel. He praises God and acknowledges that he is the greatest Savior of all gods.

Now in chapter 4 of Daniel we see an amazing account of how this most famous king of Babylon went through a very similar experience as Job in terms of suffering and surviving in his pride he thought of himself more highly than he ought, and God had to teach him that he only had what he had by God's power and authority. God judged him and he became a madman. He lost his mind and became like a wild animal. He was eating grass like a cow and was totally insane. God was teaching him a lesson in humanity, but he gave him another chance. When he was restored to his right mind we read this testimony in 4:34-37. "At the end of that time, I Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High, I honored and gloried Him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand

**or say to Him: What have you done? At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of Heaven, because everything He does is right and all His ways are just. And those who walk in pride He is able to humble."**

**You would have a hard time finding anything that surpasses this song of praise to Jehovah, and it comes from a polytheistic heathen king of Babylon. This opens up more doors than we can begin to even peek behind, but lets explore a few. The first thing that struck me is how God in mercy restored this proud king. Many are smashed in judgment and never recover, but here God does to this heathen what he did for Job. He restores him to greater glory than he had before his judgment. Nebuchadnezzar was able to save face even though he was made to be like a wild animal. God gave him back his mind and his glory, and he became a humble man.**

**This is a principle by which God operates. If pride leads to a fall, and judgment must come, it is still not too late for the man who can learn from judgment to forsake his pride. God can even use the judgment for the ultimate good of one who learns by judgment to be humble. Pride is the number one sin that leads to some kind of crisis, and humility is the only way to come out a winner. This account of Nebuchadnezzar makes it clear that God is ever playing the role of the Hound of Heaven toward the rulers of nations. In his famous poem Francis Thompson begins-**

**"I fled him down the nights and down the days,  
I fled him down the arches of the years.  
I fled him down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears  
I hid from Him and under running laughter,**

**Up vistad hopes I sped;  
And shot, precipitated  
A down titanic glooms of chasmed fears,  
From those strong feet that followed, followed often.**

**Thompson wrote this poem to describe his own experience. He dropped out of the study for the ministry and got on opium. He ended up a ragged unkempt bum in the London slums. Fortunately for him he was befriended by the Christian poets Mr. and Mrs. Willfrid Maynell, and they by patient understanding led him to surrender to Christ. He became a Christian poet and wrote the Hound of Heaven in gratitude to God for being the Selestial Hunter who stayed on his trail and tracked him down even in the slums. He had to learn the hard way, but he did learn, and this is what we see in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. He was not a down and outer, but an up and outer. But both had the same basic problem. In pride they would run their own lives and escape the control of God. Chapter 4 of Daniel is Nebuchadnezzar's testimony of the Hound of Heaven tracking him and finally teaching him to surrender and win. He too had to learn the hard way, but the good news is he did learn, and a great man became greater by the grace of God.**

**There are many who are skeptical and suspicious of the testimony of this great king. They find it hard to believe that Nebuchadnezzar really became a believer in Jehovah, for if he did, this means that the famous heathen ruler of Babylon will be our brother in heaven. This man who destroyed God's temple and the Holy City of Jerusalem, and who carried away God's people into captivity is one who will be among the saints of God praising Him forever.**

**This truth rubs people the wrong way, and it goes against the grain of human pride. Some feel that if God is going to let every Tom, Dick, and Nebuchadnezzar into heaven, they are not sure they**

want to go. What if Saddam Hussain became a believer and, like Nebuchadnezzar, acknowledged the God of the Bible to be his Sovereign Lord. Many would vote that he be sent to hell if God let such a decision be made by the majority vote. I wonder how many votes Nebuchadnezzar would have gotten? There are many who doubt the validity of his testimony, and so they consider him still a lost heathen. Men of such stature as Calvin hold this view.

I personally think it is exciting to see God working in his life this way, for it shows the very sovereignty of God that Nebuchadnezzar is praising. Israel was defeated, and the temple was destroyed. The people of God were displaced, and one could conclude that God's plan was a flop, but it was not so. God does not cease to work just because His people utterly fail Him. God goes on working in the lives of those in the heathen world, and this testimony of Nebuchadnezzar is a great example.

As Christians we are not unlike the Jews. We tend to feel that God only works through Christians, and if Christians fail, then God has no other means by which to get His will done in the world. This is a very narrow and limited view of the God of the Bible. He is not tied to His chosen people at all. He works in the lives and decisions of the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. God is working through all kinds of governments to accomplish His purpose, and many of them are not Christian at all. The Bible will not support the limited view of God's sovereignty. I believe the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar is in the Bible because God is revealing to His people for all time that He can win powerful heathen rulers to Himself. This is not in the Bible as an example of a fate testimony, but as an authentic testimony to the grace of God, even in the world of the polytheist.

Nebuchadnezzar had many gods, but he came to acknowledge Jehovah as God of gods. In Babylon today, and in the whole of the

**Arab world, there is no longer any polytheism, but pure monotheism. The God that Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is now the only God who is acknowledged and honored in that part of the world.**

**The reason it is dangerous for Christians to preach of Christ there is because they see it as introducing another god, rather than the God of Abraham. They, like the Jews, will hear of no other god, and they refuse to accept that Jesus is the God of the Bible. Once that can be seen these people could easily become Christians, but that is a blindness not easily overcome. But the point is, they are already a step closer than Nebuchadnezzar was, for he had many gods, and today these people have only one, and he is the God of the Old Testament.**

**Many feel that Nebuchadnezzar could not help but fall back into his idolatry, and that is why they doubt his true conversion. But if it is not real, then the whole account of it is a waste of our time, and we have to call Daniel foolish for recording it, and God mistaken to have it become a part of His Holy Word. We have here a whole chapter of God's inspired Word written by an uninspired hypocrite if Nebuchadnezzar was not a true convert to the God of Israel. It is much ado about nothing if it does not reveal the valid conversion of this great king. It means that God did a miracle and restored him, and then gave him greater glory than ever, even though it was all a sham. I prefer to see it as the marvelous account of how God used this man to destroy the old Jerusalem and temple, and then win him to Himself so that he will join the chorus in the New Jerusalem forever singing the praises of his God.**

**Look at verse 1 where we see Nebuchadnezzar making his proclamation, not just to Babylon, or to his people only, but to the people of the entire world as he knew it. You have to have a mighty strong conviction to make your testimony universal and have it**

**translated into all the languages of the world. He did not just pin this on the castle bulletin board for his servants, or just put it in the local paper. He spread the news over the whole globe of his awareness that the God of the people he took captive had taken him captive, and made a believer out of him. Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilling the Great Commission before it was ever given, for he is preaching to the whole world the one true God. Only eternity will reveal how many lives were changed by this message. It gave the Jews a whole new history of freedom, and there is no way to know how many Gentiles became believers because of this testimony.**

**Chapter 4 reveals a marked change in the spirit of this all-powerful monarch. He can kill as he chooses, and his first proclamation is that all who do not bow to his idol will be thrown into the fiery furnace. After the 3 Jews survived that, he proclaims that any who speak against the God of Israel will be cut to pieces. There is always the threat of death that goes with his proclamations. This is the way of the totalitarian ruler. But now in chapter 4 there is a positive proclamation of the wonders and miracles of God, and of His grace and restoring Nebuchadnezzar to his glory. There is no threat, but just a beautiful testimony revealing that he had changed from a proud king to a humble servant of God, and now with a more kind and merciful approach to his people. He did not say bow down to God or die, but look here at the marvelous power and love of the God who saved me. We have a picture here of a converted monarch who went from insane to humane.**

**The officials all over the world who received this proclamation must have read and reread it looking for some kind of threat if the message was not heeded, and wondering if it really was from the king. When the man who has conquered the world is being nice to you when he does not have to, then you are dealing with a man who has had a radical change in his life. Nebuchadnezzar was changed, and because of it we have hope in this world that any tyrant can be**

**changed and become one of God's chosen if they will surrender to Him. That is why we must always pray for the leaders of nations who are not believers. We must even pray for the terrible tyrants because in the sovereignty and grace of God they can go from insane to humane.**

## **17. GOOD IS THE WORD Based on Dan. 4**

**Franz Liszt, the great musician, was also quite a diplomat. Being famous in the field of music led to his being constantly put on the spot by women who expected unmerited praise for their singing. He finally developed a stock reply when some young amateur would inquire, "Maestro, do you think I have a good voice?" "Ah, my dear young lady," Liszt would reply with vibrant sincerity, "Good is not the word." The word might have been awful, but he not only avoided saying it and offending the person, he allowed them to interpret it according to their own pride, and they would be pleased with him because they would assume it was a compliment.**

**It is surprising how cleverly one can lie while speaking nothing but the truth. Good is not the word. This reminds me of the pastor who was put on the spot by one of his members. She had baked a cake for him and his family. She apparently left something out for it tasted horrible, and they had to throw it away. The next time he met the woman she asked him how they liked the cake? He didn't want to tell her the truth, but he also did not want to lie, and so he said, "You can't imagine how fast your cake goes at our house." If she had asked him if it was good he could have used the reply of Liszt, "Good is not the word."**

**What has this got to do with old Nebuchadnezzar? Several things, for it reveals the subtlety of language and the ease with which**

**words can be misinterpreted. We will consider this further a little later. The immediate connection is with the fact that for Nebuchadnezzar good was the word. He was not using this positive word to diplomatically convey and opposite impression of what he really thought. He says he thought it good to pass on his personal testimony of what had done in his life. Good was the word, and he meant by it that he felt it to be a positive value for all to hear of his experience with God. This is the author's own explanation for the existence of this chapter. He thought it was good. This adds to the evidence that this king was a true believer, for what unregenerate man would consider it good to record such a humbling experience, and especially one so mighty as Nebuchadnezzar? All the facts of history and psychology are against it. Humiliating incidents in the lives of ancient rulers were suppressed and blotted out of the records if possible. It was certainly not the practice to make public proclamation of them by special letter from the king himself.**

**Ernest Tatham in his book Daniel Speaks Today says, "It is impossible to read this narrative without gaining the fullest conviction that Nebuchadnezzar, as a result of his remarkable humbling, became a truly regenerate man." I agree with this conviction. Good was the word for Nebuchadnezzar. It seemed good to him to share his conviction about the greatness of God, and of how he came to that conviction. When God works so persistently and works miracle after miracle to win a man, and the man himself acknowledges that God has succeeded in winning him, it is time to face the fact about that man's conversion.**

**Verse 3 reveals a man whose eyes have been open to the marvels of God's nature and power. Here was a king who could sing the hymn How Great Thou Art with conviction. His concept of God may have been far from perfect, but it was as exalted as a human mind can conceive. God was the almighty and everlasting sovereign whose kingdom had no end. He begins with the conclusion and then goes on**



to tell the story of how he arrived at that conclusion. In verse 4 he gives us the setting. He was lazily lounging in his plush palace like a typical oriental king. Prosperity beyond our imagination surrounded him. He had won wars all over the world, and now all was under his control. Peace and prosperity was his, and he was living the life of luxury in his palace.

Had God not introduced a problem into his life there is no reason to believe that he would have ever given God another thought. He had everything life could offer, and he felt no need of God. Jesus said that it is almost impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. The reason it is impossible for man is that his pride and wealth combine to make himself-sufficient. He sees no need for God, and the idea of crying out for help is so undignified that he call for surrender to Christ is only an offense. The only way such persons can be won is by the path of trial. Troubles are the only hope for men who have everything. Unless they can be humbled there is no hope. It is a paradox, but the fact is, trouble is the rich man's greatest blessing.

Nebuchadnezzar's story is one with a good ending. His trouble all began with a dream. He was a strong believer in dreams, and when he had one he took it very seriously. This one really shook him up, and he must have sensed that it was not a good dream. He called for the magicians again and again, and they were no help, for they could not interpret the dream, even though this time he remembered it and could tell them what it was all about. Verse 8 says that at last Daniel showed up, and in verse 9 he is called the chief of the magicians. The king had confidence in him that he could help him, for no mystery was too hard for Daniel. He told him the dream and then asks for its interpretation. The book of Daniel shows the importance of interpretation more than any other book. God's revelation to man is worthless without interpretation. The king

**could even repeat the revelation he received, and yet it had no meaning to him without interpretation. God's truth has no meaning until it is interpreted so that men understand what He intended to communicate.**

**The Ethiopian Eunuch in the book of Acts had a copy of God's Word and was reading it as he rode along in his chariot. He had God's Word, but yet he didn't have it. It might just as well have been a tablet of hieroglyphics, for he did not understand it. Then he heard it explained and he responded and was saved. Mere position of the Bible or a Gospel track is not a communication of God's Word. One only possesses God's Word when it is interpreted properly so that we understand what God has said. The dream the king had was from God, but the dream itself was not the message. It was only the vehicle of the message. The dream contained the Word of God, but it only became the Word of God when it was interpreted and understood.**

**The dream was about a tree and its greatness and its fall. You could study trees forever and never come to any understanding of what this dream meant. It had to be interpreted so that its symbolism became understandable. The king could understand perfectly the symbols, for even a first grade child could understand a story about a great tree and its being cut down. The Bible is not interpreted, however, just because we know what all the words are. It is only interpreted when we know what the words mean. This was the king's problem. He knew what the dream said, but he didn't know what it meant.**

**Life is filled with problems that arise because people do not make a distinction between knowing what is said and what is meant. Like the salesman who picked up a hippy hitchhiker just before a terrific sleet storm blew up. In a short while the roads were slippery and vision was extremely limited. The salesman stopped at a stop**

sign where two highways intersected. He asked his passenger if he saw anything from his side. He responded, "No man. Just a dog." So the salesman started through, but three days later he woke up in the hospital and saw his passenger in the next bed. He shouted at him, "Hey you! I thought you said there was only a dog." He replied, "Sure man-a Greyhound." Being able to define the word dog would not guarantee that one understands the meaning of that word in every context. If the hippy would have been an interpreter, he could have easily made it clear what he meant.

This is not a matter, which applies just to the incidental and foolish, but it is important in the most vital areas of life. Anyone can hear the statement of Jesus when He says, "I am the door." They have no problem in defining what He said, for they know what a door is, but it is meaningless until we know what He meant. It calls for interpretation, and then we learn that Jesus is conveying to us that He is the way by which we enter the kingdom of God. I've labored this point because it is so essential for us to be conscience of this distinction. We think that speech, words and symbols are in themselves a communication of truth, but it is not so without interpretation.

Someone said that when a woman puts her hand out of the car window while driving it means only one thing-the window is open. In other words, it has no certain meaning that can be accurately interpreted. At least the joker that said this found some meaning in that symbol, but the magicians of Babylon could not come up with anything as they heard the king's dream. It was up to Daniel to be the interpreter, but this time it was not his life only that was at stake, but it was the king's life as well. When Daniel heard the dream he was shocked, and verse 19 gives the impression that he just stared in silent shock at this dream. The king urged him to speak up and not be afraid, for he wanted to know the truth. There is always hope for a man who wants to face reality. Daniel then prepared the king for

**the worst by saying he hoped the dream would be for those who hated the king, and that the interpretation would be for his enemies.**

## **18. AIDS ANALYZED    Based on Dan. 9:1-19**

**If you are embarrassed or angry about condoms being advertised on TV, you can thank your brother in Christ, C. Everett Koop. He was for 8 years the highest medical authority in our land as the Surgeon General of the United States. He shocked everyone, and especially his evangelical Christian friends, when he became a crusader to get the message out by radio, TV, magazines, and newspapers, that if people are going to be sexually active they have a moral obligation to use condoms.**

**On the surface it does not sound much like a Christian cause. Why should a Christian leader in his powerful position try to appeal to immoral people to be moral in this one area of life? The answer is-aids. The Christian doctor and leader knows that tens of thousands of Americans have already died, and that millions more will be infected. It is not only a national disaster, but a world wide disaster that makes earthquakes and other natural disasters look puny in comparison. Aids is a real pro disaster. It is the Goliath of tragedies in our time. There have been similar formidable foes in the past.**

**There were several epidemics of the bubonic plague. The first was in the 6th century and it killed millions the world over. In Byzantium ten thousand a day died and grave diggers could not keep up. Ships were piled high with the bodies and they were sent out to sea. The second epidemic was called the Black Death. It hit in the 14th century and was so great an enemy that it killed people within a day. They could go to bed well, get the disease while they slept, and**

**die in their sleep. Everyone expected to die, and it was thought by most to be the end of the world. By the time it had run its course it was the end of the world for 75 million people. That was half the population of 14th century Europe.**

**I share these gruesome facts so we at least see the present in perspective and do not feel we live in the worst of times. Disease wise this is not the case. But aids is an exceedingly clever and dangerous foe, and Dr. Koop knew that radical means were necessary to prevent history from repeating itself. Nobody likes a rerun of real life disaster. He took the risk of offending his Christian friends because he realized that immoral people are not going to conform to Christian morality. If we wait for that to happen it may be too late for all of us was the way he thought. He felt that even immoral people prefer to live rather than die, and if they can be aided in preventing a dangerous disease that not only kills them but innocent people, then it was his moral obligation to help them prevent it.**

**Let me give you an example from the book authored by 5 Christian doctors titled Christian Faith, Health and Medical Practice. Nicole Burk is the only member of her family who does not have aids. Her father contracted it through a blood transfusion before blood supply was being screened as it is today. He then infected her mother, and she in turn gave it to her little brother Dwight during pregnancy, or through breast feeding. The father and the brother are already dead. Nicole alone has escaped this family tragedy. She lost her whole family, and it was not due to any sin in their lives. This type of tragedy is going on more frequently than we realize. That is why Dr. Koop spoke out. He said, "People criticize me because they see homosexuals or drug abusers or promiscuous people as being sort of beyond the pale and it (AIDS) is no more than they deserve. My answer to that is that I am the Surgeon General of the heterosexuals and the homosexuals, of the young and the old, of the moral or the immoral, the married and the**

**unmarried. I don't have the luxury of deciding which side I want to be on. So I can tell you how to keep yourself alive no matter what you are. That's my job."**

**Koop said he really had no choice, for he had to care about people who are immoral and who are suffering as a result of their immorality. The question I asked is this: Was that his job because of his being the Surgeon General, or is that his job because of being a Christian? It is my contention that a Christian has no choice than to care about sinners who suffer because of their own sin. The reason I chose Dan. 9 as a text for a sermon on aids is because we have here a clear illustration of a people who are under a curse of God. They are suffering greatly the judgment of God as a direct result of their sin and violation of God's laws. Yet Daniel in his prayer is so compassionate in his pleading for these disaster ridden people. He cares about them, and he prays for their forgiveness and healing.**

**The point is, just because someone is under the judgment of God and is suffering as a direct result of their sin, it is never a valid reason to reject them as candidates for compassionate care and prayer. Homosexuality is repulsive to the heterosexual, but not more repulsive than the vile and sinful rebellion of God's people. Yet here is a prayer of compassion for them. The issue of aids is not just a matter of people being judged for their immoral behavior. There is, no doubt, many who are, but there are also many who are not. It is also true that many homosexuals will never get aids. Unfortunately young children who get aids die faster than anyone. There are many completely innocent people who have aids. The majority of cases are directly related to sexual activity, and much of it is immoral, but that still leaves us where Daniel is in this great prayer.**

**If we are caring people, then we care about people who are killing themselves by their sin. Jesus did. He healed people all the time who were sick and dying because of their sin. Jesus healed by saying,**

**"Your sins be forgiven." He said, "Go and sin no more lest a worse thing come upon you." Most all of the people he healed were people under bondage to Satan and his demons. Many were prostitutes and publicans, and the people despised by the respectable crowd. They wanted to know why Jesus wasted His time with such trash, and Jesus said that it was the sick who needed the doctor.**

**Jesus was a doctor who said, as Dr. Koop has said, all sick people are my patients and I do not make a distinction between those who are sick by circumstances and those who are sick by their own foolish lifestyle which is out of God's will. Every Christian doctor I have read feels the same obligation to care for the aids victim as they do for any other sick person. In the book I quoted earlier by the 5 Christian doctors they point out the obligation to treat the aids patient. "In 1847, when the American Medical Association was organized, its first code stated that 'when pestilence prevails, it is the physicians duty to face the danger, and to continue their labor for the alleviation of the suffering, even at the jeopardy of their own lives.'"**

**In 1987 this code was reaffirmed in response to aids. So even an atheist doctor is to be committed to care for an aids patient even if they are dying as a result of their own folly. The point is, doctors do face a risk in caring for people. It is part of their job. It is an occupational hazard. The question is, can the Christian justify caring less than doctors do? I think not in the light of the Scriptures. If you are an evolutionist you can argue that aids will kill off a lot of ignorant and immoral people, and so the best thing is to just let them destroy themselves and do nothing to help them. Survival of the fittest is the way the system works.**

**If you are a Christian you know the whole Bible says the principle is not the survival of the fittest, but the salvation of the unfit. Fallen and sinful man is still made in the image of God, and he is the object of God's love even when he is under God's judgment. All men are**

**under this judgment, and yet God sent His Son to die for the ungodly. The Christian cannot possibly go the way of the evolutionist and have the mind of Christ. The Christian has to care for those under judgment just as Daniel does in our text. Under the curse and the condemnation of God, and yet Daniel is pleading for these people that they might still receive God's grace.**

**Why is it so hard for Christians to be compassionate to aids victims like they are with cancer victims? The reason I think is that there is a lot of misunderstanding about the disease. Many are like myself who thought for years that disease was caused only by homosexuality. I am grateful for Christian doctors who have helped me grasp a more valid picture of the disease. Two non-infected homosexuals can have sex for a lifetime with no risk of aids. The aids virus is transmitted by sex, but it is not created by sex. So any kind of sex between people who do not have the virus can never lead to aids. But any kind of sex can spread the disease when the virus is present. You can only get aids sexually from sex with a person with the virus, and if a person has aids then it makes no difference if sex is homo or hetero, for it can lead to aids either way.**

**Prostitutes with aids transfer it to their male partners just the same as homosexuals transfer it. So why are there more homosexuals with aids? Because they are more promiscuous and have more partners, and their methods open up greater opportunity for the virus to pass from one to the other. The major problem is promiscuity. If homosexuals were faithful to one partner they would have no higher risk than the heterosexual. The aids epidemic has made it clear that sex is meant to be an exclusive experience between two people. Even abnormal sex is safe sex if it is an exclusive experience. People who become promiscuous become sitting ducks for this deadly enemy. If you are faithful to a non-affected person you can never get aids, and that goes for both homo and hetero partners.**



**The point of all this is to help us see that it is not the sin of abnormal sex that leads to the disease. Even normal sex will lead to it if one of the partners is carrying the virus. The most sinful sex you can imagine will not lead to it if the partners do not carry the virus. This brings us back to why Dr. Koop has urged people to use the condom. He knows we live in an age of promiscuity where more than one partner is the in thing. That is what is killing people and spreading this disease. The condom can save the lives of these sexually irresponsible people and help man get control of this deadly foe. It is not birth control, but death control that he was seeking.**

**Like Daniel, he cared for people who are cursed and under God's judgment, and who deserve everything they get. He cares enough to try and reduce the population of these people. Many Christians have denounced him as a threat to morality, but others see him as a great Christian hero, for he has expressed Christian compassion in a very practical way. The people that Daniel is praying for are suffering as a result of breaking God's laws. The disease of aids is also a direct result of sinful immorality among both homo and hetero partners. In both Africa and Hati where the disease got its start the majority of cases were of heterosexual people.**

**The message that his disease sends to the world is-listen to God. He made the body and He made sex. He knows what is good for man and what is destructive. If we follow His clear guidelines we will be safe from all the suffering and sorrow that is in store for those who are enticed to follow the way of promiscuity. But how should we respond to those who follow the way of folly and get the disease? The Christian is caught in an emotion bind, for they contempt for the sinful actions of those who get the disease, but they know they should have compassion just as Daniel did. How can we have compassion when we also have contempt? It is by education, for the more you know the better able you are to be Christ like.**

**We need to be digging for facts and not jumping to conclusions, for this is the kind of exercise that is most helpful for the Christian mind. Dr. Michael Leming, a professor at St Olaf College, is a specialist in the area of dying and bereavement, and he claims that the leading cause of death for men ages 22 to 65 will be aids. But there is good news in the terrible reality. He has discovered what many others have, and that is that aids patients are a wide open field for evangelism. A Jewish psychiatrist from New York called him and asked him why aids patients have such an intense interest in spiritual issues. He had never encountered such a phenomenon with any other group of dying people.**

**A chaplain in a hospital in California also discovered that aids patients are suffering sinners who desperately need hope and some good news that there is a Savior. They know they are facing eternity, and they want hope. This chaplain admits that he was disgusted with homosexual and wanted nothing to do with them. But then he found he had to deal with them as dying patients. He writes, "You cannot sit across the room or look at somebody eyeball to eyeball, and hate him. You just can't hate people that way. You can categorize AIDS; put it in a box. I could do that. I was smug and self-righteous about the whole thing, but when I sat at the bedside of these men day after day, I found significant, talented, beautiful people whom God loves."**

**"I was beside the bed of a 52 year old man. It was 4 o'clock in the morning and he asked me to be there. He was dying. As the nurse was about to give him his last injection of morphine, I was able to remind Robert of the decision he made two weeks earlier to trust Christ, and he nodded. I began recalling to him Jesus' love and the hope of eternity with Christ. I didn't know it at the time, but he was only a breath away from being with God. And then I said to him, 'Robert, I love you.' And he mouthed back, 'I love you too.' That's the first, AIDS patient I had ever said, "I love you" to, and I meant it. I sincerely grieved his death. You cannot minister, you cannot be**

**close to somebody with this disease, and ever be the same again."**

**Maybe you and I will never know an aids patient, but the question is, if we ever do, are we prepared to have the mind of Christ and the attitude of Daniel? Will there be a hateful stare, or a heartfelt prayer, and an outreached hand of care?**