



The call of Daniel

Daniel 1:1-21

Daniel 2:31-46; 3:13-25; 5:1-5, 17-27; 6:1-24

There is no call to Daniel like that of Moses or Isaiah. As a scrupulous Jew it would have been a defilement to take of the pagan king's food and drink. In spite of the danger of losing the king's favour and preferment, Daniel refused and this test was the call.

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way. Daniel 1:8

The faith was already there and the challenge was to show evidence of it. Not everyone can indicate any specific day when God addressed them and summoned them to faith and service. There are those who cannot remember a time when they did not believe or love Jesus. Daniel would seem to be one, and his staunch faith could not be called into question.

Many years later, the Jews must have obtained great strength from the Book of Daniel when Antiochus Epiphanes attacked them. The Jews were threatened with the extinction of their faith and practice through the campaign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Greek king. Jews were particular about food. Antiochus tried to compel them to eat forbidden food. The Jews refused and often had to go hungry. The attempt was made to stamp out the Jewish practice of prayer and to compel them to worship Greek gods, under severe penalty.

The example of Daniel shows that God preserves His faithful people and this would comfort the Jews of that time. In Babylon, Jews came under great pressure because of their faith and, as a result, Daniel is flung into the lions' den, the most precarious of all situations, and yet is preserved. Daniel believed that God is sovereign, that if the Jew is faithful, God will not fail him but deliver him. The three faithful Jews flung into the fiery furnace represent all those faithful Jews who had to face up to the frenzy of persecution and yet came out unscathed. God was with them in the midst of their suffering.

Jesus says that the very hairs of our head are numbered, and there is a great note of triumph over adversity that runs throughout the New Testament.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:6-7

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 1 Peter 4:12-13

Whatever mighty powers are arrayed against the faithful, e.g. Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar or Antiochus Epiphanes, there is always the judgment of God, the expression of His sovereignty; and even a Belshazzar or Antiochus Epiphanes is being weighed in the balances and found wanting.

"This is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Daniel 5:26-27

The message of Daniel is that

- God is to be trusted,
- He expects us to be faithful to Him and
- There is nothing in this world that can separate us from His care.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:35-39

Discussion

What is meant by the statement that "God is Sovereign"? It is easy to see the "Sovereignty of God" in the case of Daniel and his three friends but what about the countless Christians who have been martyred down the centuries?