



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 19th February 2017

by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Daniel 2:14 - 23

Subject: Chapter 2, Part 7 – The Day, The Hour, The Moment

Verse 13 Recap -

Last week we saw the “Dilemma” of the king and how the king created a ‘dilemma’ for all the appointed wise men of Babylon. As they looked for time to come up with something of a solution, the king became indignant and extremely furious which ended in him throwing everyone in the kingdom into a tizzy. In Verse 13, the Amplified Bible states that the decree went forth, which meant that it had to be written up and recorded before the orders were given for it to be followed through. No doubt this was fast tracked because it appears that the Captain went looking for Daniel and his friends.

This week our text shows us that Daniel with discretion and wisdom spoke to Arioch the captain executioner or (the captain of the king’s bodyguard depending on the version of your bible) when he arrived to arrest Daniel and his friends for execution as ordered by the King. At this point Daniel asked the reason for the King’s decree.

Now in these verses we witness another miracle, right before us. In verse 14 and 15 a conversation takes place. Obviously there was more to the conversation than we see here, anyway, we are given the highlight of it which resulted in Daniel seeking an audience with the



king with the view of putting a date and a time to resolve the king's request. That's what is called sticking your neck out, putting your life on the line. I'm sure the rest of the magicians, sorcerers, astrologers, Chaldeans and all who were considered to be part of the group of wise men, were behind Daniel but so far behind you would not notice them.

Now this raises interesting points for us as believers in our day. I am going to raise three that I found in the text this morning.

1.. Standing up in Faith in our Time – Verses 14-16

“Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, “Why is the decree from the king so urgent?” Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel. So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation.” (NKJV)

Remember, there were no facts known either to the Chaldeans or to Daniel. Like what we have read in the previous verses, they only knew; The king had a dream, a dream which troubled him greatly and he wanted answers without giving any clues. The situation amounted to nothing except for the king's wrath and the decree *proposed!* It was both silly and serious at the same time. Except we know that divine history was being made and through these sequences of events that unfolded, history of mankind and redemptive revelation was about to shine into the darkness. The Time of the Gentiles was at the break of dawn.

God gave Daniel favour before the court not just with the eunuch but with the chief executioner, and it's always good to have favour with that rank don't you think? Now we know that the others did not get anywhere with the king. By the time Arioch had found Daniel and his friends, there were already dead wise men. Why would Daniel have any chance if the others didn't? The answer - ***God was with Daniel and Daniel used the gifts that God gave him.***

Let me just apply that thought for a moment – God has given to each one of us, the knowledge of Himself and the ability to serve Him.

Paul declares this truth as he prays for the church in Ephesians 1 verses 17 and 18 –



“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”

Remember God has given us general gifts as well as more specific gifts. These gifts are primarily to Glorify God and to encourage the church. We can find this truth throughout the new testament, for example:

- Practical Gifts – Romans 12:6-8
- Fruits of the Spirit - Galatians 5:22-23
- Spiritual Gifts - 1 Corinthians 12

But Do we know this? Do we want to apply this in our lives? If so what are we doing about it, are we giving back to God these gifts so God can be glorified?

Coming back to the text, did Daniel know he had God’s blessing on his life? We don’t know since are not told, but I’m sure that it was not by feelings that Daniel moved, but by faith. Trust in God and in His Word, Daniel was both a man in the book and a man of the book. We know this because of Daniel 9, verse 2

“ in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet”

Verses 14 to 16 are not filled with Daniel’s concern only for himself or his friends but he was also concerned with the injustices of what was happening and he wanted to sort the matter out.

Let’s just take as side step again to think about Daniels actions and ask the questions, would we have done the same thing in his situation? Do we believe that this kind of involvement is our concern in our time? When we come to consider such social matters, we have, out of necessity, to order our priorities; it is both the preaching and living out the Gospel, the belief in God who has the answer to our infirmities and the cure for our ailments. With that clear in our minds and lives, we can proceed in a way that glorifies God and not man. If we move ever so slightly from the light of the Gospel and his commandments, we, not the Lord, will cast a dark shadow and end up doing not good works but just works that will please man and probably send them to hell.

Social concern without the Gospel is Socialism not evangelism, make no mistake about that. The early church as recorded in the book of Acts is a great handbook for this subject. The early church had more than a generous concern for the saints, primarily, but also for the unsaved as did Jesus in His healing ministry. But it was tightly bound with the preaching and practice of the Gospel truth.

Christian people have often engaged in both activities quite unselfconsciously, without feeling any need to define what they were doing or why. There were some remarkable examples of this in eighteenth-century Europe and America. The Evangelical Revival, which stirred both continents, is not to be thought of only in terms of the preaching of the gospel and the converting of sinners to Christ; it also profoundly affected society on both sides of the Atlantic.

John Wesley remains one of the most striking instance. He is mostly remembered as the itinerant evangelist and open air preacher. And so he was, but the gospel he preached inspired people to take up social causes in the name of Christ. Historians have attributed to Wesley's influence rather than to any other the fact that Britain was spared the horrors of a bloody revolution like that in France.

The Gospel, the true Gospel as contained in the Bible, has the power to change not just our eternal destiny but our earthly hearts and minds. It has the power to remove the stone of self from our place of death and allow the voice of God to raise us up in resurrection power bringing us to life and light so that we live not just for self but for the glory of God and good of all. This place would be not just a darker place but a sadder place if it were not for the redemption of the Lord.

Now, let's return to our text and the second point.

2.. Standing up in Faith for the Hour - Verses 17-18

"Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon."



From a human point of view solely, it would have been wise to plan an escape right there and then. Daniel, no doubt knew in his heart what he must do regardless of the difficulty. He went to his house as the verses informs us, his friends were there and Daniel gives them the report.

Together they sought the Lord. This was the hour (or time if you like) not to arrange a conference or committee meeting to discuss the matter but it was time to seek God in prayer. Persecution has a tremendous way to sharpen the mind and cut out the “aspirations” from the immediate need. In other words, persecution focuses the mind of what is immediately important instead of our shopping list or what we would like (which of course, there’s no harm in bringing these things to the Lord as we are told to bring all things before God.)

People in these situations are not looking for an “out” but for an “in”, so as to know more of God and see Him work in their situation. And they do see Him work, very clearly and very powerfully. The early church grew as a result of such persecution, it didn’t diminish, as we see it today in the West.

What can I say to most of you this morning about the power and effects of prayer that you don’t know already? Yet! ...yet, we still need to be encouraged to stand together, to seek God, to learn to intercede, praise, worship. Why? Because the hour, the time, we live in, is a dark hour. The mood in the city of Babylon had undoubtedly changed, death and the threat of death loomed in the air. The king was angry and his wrath was about to fall. Many no doubt went about their business without a care in the world unmindful of what was happening in the background.

There is a parallel here of what occurs today. Take the truth of the New Testament and what it has to say about the just judgment of God that is on everyone who does not believe in the Gospel! We have family and friends and those we know standing under its eternal consequences and still many “play” the Christian while the fire is kindled. We need even more today to forget our comfort, our agenda, the expenses perhaps and come together in greater number and cry to God for more of Him. When we know more of God, we have a greater reality of Him. When we allow Him to move as He wills in our lives, then we move out in Faith occurring to His will and live fruitful lives. Do we want to increase or decrease? We can decrease by simply doing nothing!

Like Daniel, God knows what we have need of before we even ask but He none the less invites us to come and seek the Lord while He may be found; to call upon His Name and to draw near to Him. Evil will prosper because the righteousness will do nothing. Daniel was not like that, and look at the results!

Throughout history we see the evidence of believers who stood up for their faith and the good of other in the hour of need. How many here has heard of the “Clapham Sect” as they were known? Around 1791, this group of people were rich and from noble background. They were a group of formidable Christians. In the British parliament they were dubbed the “Saints” because of their uncompromised commitment to Christ. It is true that "the Saints" were wealthy aristocrats, who shared some of the social blind spots of their time, but they were extremely generous, and the range of their concerns was extraordinary. In addition to dissolving the slave trade, they involved themselves in penal and parliamentary reform, popular education (Sunday Schools, tracts and the *Christian Observer* newspaper), ensuring Britain's obligation to her colonies (especially India), the spread of the gospel (they were instrumental in the founding of both the Bible Society and the Church Missionary Society), and factory workers legislation to improve working conditions for all. They also campaigned against duelling, gambling, drunkenness, immorality and cruel animal sports. Throughout the movement, they were directed and motivated by their strong evangelical faith. Ernest Marshall Howse wrote of them:

"This group of Clapham friends gradually became knit together in an astonishing intimacy and solidarity. They planned and laboured like a committee that never was dissolved. At the Clapham mansions they congregated by common impulse in what they chose to call their "Cabinet Councils" wherein they discussed the wrongs and injustices which were a reproach to their country, and the battles which would need to be fought to establish righteousness. And thereafter, in Parliament and out, they moved as one body, delegating to each man the work he could do best, that their common principles might be maintained and their common purposes be realized."

One man with God can and has done extraordinary things and this group saints are a great example of what we can do collective if move in the power of the Gospel. When we look again into the chapter of Acts 2, particularly verses 42 to 47, we find that there were more than two or three gathered before God, and look again at what was accomplished through prayer and action.



I don't know about you but I am still moved often to tears when I hear of God answering prayer, as people are witnesses to the power of God in Salvation of souls, or the healing of bodies or the raising of the dead, or whatever the answer is. This all comes from God...our Heavenly Father, who is only a prayer away and yet sometimes we have to battle through and not give up. It's not that God has gone out for a while or can't understand us, no not at all. Are we willing to hold on before God? Sometimes it is a spiritual battle and also it can be God changing us through the process of continually seeking Him, but are we serious enough?

Would we be prepared to climb the roof and take the tiles off and let our need down to the feet of the Lord! Have to ever gone up onto a roof? What about taking those brittle tiles off and standing on the edge of them and lowering a weight? It's the effort, it's the time, it's the risk of the outcome! Or would we rather wait for a more "convenient" hour? Let me assure you that the hour is now, we are not promised or assured of another. We are called to stand in faith for this hour not another, do you see!

Psalm 30 v 5b

"Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning."

Now for the final point

3.. Rejoicing in God for the moment – Verses 19-23

Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

Daniel answered and said:

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,

For wisdom and might are His.

And He changes the times and the seasons;

He removes kings and raises up kings;

He gives wisdom to the wise

And knowledge to those who have understanding.

He reveals deep and secret things;

He knows what is in the darkness,

And light dwells with Him.



*“I thank You and praise You,
O God of my fathers;
You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what we asked of You,
For You have made known to us the king’s demand.”*

During the night, maybe while they were praying, maybe while Daniel was having a quiet time, God answered their prayer. Imagine being there! I know I wish was. God gave to Daniel both the dream and its interpretation.

--- “Thank you Lord now let’s sing psalm 23”. Let’s not get too excited or emotional about it. After all we have to keep a proper “decorum” after all we are the kings men”

--- Would that have been your reaction in that circumstance? I don’t think so. Yet, do you often react like that when God answers prayer, even if we consider them small victories!

A secret had been revealed by God, it was reason to rejoice, don’t you think. I can only imagine the other’s on hearing the praise that followed thinking, “These Jews are crazy.” But of course that is not in the text as you know!

The prayer of thanksgiving that followed is interesting. Daniel’s heart and mind and voice was all lifted up to God alone in praise. There was not a glimpse of glory here for himself. For so many, when God answers prayer, they can’t seem to help themselves of self-promotion but not Daniel. All the glory went intact to the Lord.

Note, Daniel’s knowledge and understanding was born out of a deep personal relationship with the Lord. It’s amazing when we spend time with the Lord the things He alone reveals to us about Himself. The words may seem simple but if you were to meditate on them they are deep. He knew that God is a Sovereign God, and that this God is his God, and there is none like Him. Just think about the implication to that alone. We find here a right pride in God, a right reverence for God, we find also his joy in being God’s child. If ever the first commandment is lifted up, it is right here.

If only we could keep thinking like this! This is a prayer born out of personal indebt knowledge of God, not a passing phase. Notice he believed that God lives and that He not only communicates but that He is reachable. I know that people say that they believe in God but I wonder do we have that confidence that God does in fact hear, that God will answer even if

it is not in the way that we hope for. Remember God has your best interests at heart and he knows the outcomes.

This is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. *“He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”*

Jesus said this and its found in Mark 12:27.

Verse 23 I know people, Christian people who would not pray like this at all, no, they pray in the singular not the plural as Daniel did in these verses. If I were part of this group I’m sure I would be dancing around with joy at this stage.

We have had some moments as well, in rejoicing before the Lord! We can look back and not be able to count the blessings and the joy that the Lord has given us. Have we any reason not to expect to do so again! I’m not speaking about rejoicing when we get to heaven but in this moment we can and ought to rejoice because our names are in the Lambs book of life and God continues to answer prayer in the most amazing ways.

Amen.