

DANIEL, THE GREATLY BELOVED MAN

Text: Daniel 9:23; Daniel 10:11; Daniel 10:19

In 1954, British playwright, Robert Bolt, wrote a play entitled, "A Man for All Seasons." In 1966 it became the Academy Award winning Best Picture. It was based on the true story of Sir Thomas More, Chancellor of England in the 16th Century. King Henry VIII wished to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon so that he could marry Anne Boleyn, in hopes of bearing him a son, an heir to the throne. More, a man of principle, was envied by peers and rivals such as Thomas Cromwell, but loved by those who knew him best in his family and by the common man.

Robert Bolt borrowed the title from Robert Whittington, a contemporary of More, who, in 1520, wrote of him: "More is a man of an angel's wit and singular learning. I know not his fellow. For where is the man of that gentleness, lowliness and affability? And, as time requireth, a man of marvelous mirth and pastimes, and sometime of as sad gravity. A man for all seasons."

Some may call Daniel a "renaissance man," a gifted, knowledgeable man in many areas and proficient in all he does. I would raise Daniel to an altogether higher level however. He was God's man and greatly beloved. Do you realize in the entire Bible there are only three times the Bible describes a man "greatly beloved?" And all three times it was in reference to Daniel. It's nice to be loved by man, but nothing can compare with being loved and appreciated by God. Jesus was able to say, "...I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29b). What a goal we all should have. It is worthy to note that when God was declaring how far his people had gone from Him, He said in Ezekiel 14:14, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD." God is saying these were three of the godliest men who ever lived, but even they would not change (by their holy lifestyle and fervent prayer) the direction of their nation. But the point I want us to observe is God's opinion of Daniel. Let's search the Scriptures in the book of Daniel and see if we find some meaningful insight as to why God had such a high opinion of Daniel.

I. Daniel was a man of noble purpose.

Daniel 1:1-9, 20. Daniel 1:8a informs us, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself...." People don't do right by accident; we do right on purpose. Joshua said, "...choose you this day whom ye will serve..." (Joshua

24:15b). Doing right with a purposed heart can be done immediately. Joshua was commanding a right decision on the day he commanded it. In II Corinthians 6:2c Paul said, "...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." In Isaiah 1:18a, God says, "Come now..." We don't have to work on doing right, just do it.

Once Daniel purposed in his heart, there was no turning back.

II. Daniel was a man of godly patience.

Daniel 2:5,16. How can we, like Daniel, develop that same patience? There are three things we need to know:

A. God knows what's in the dark. –Daniel 2:22. Exodus 20:21 says, "And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was." Psalm 139:12 reminds us, "Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

B. God is in control. – Daniel 2:28.

C. God makes a way for those who give Him the glory. –Daniel 2:47.

III. Daniel was a man who spoke truth to power.

Daniel 4:27; Daniel 5:20, 22-28.

In 1934, during his second year as chancellor of the German Reich, Adolf Hitler invited the leaders of the evangelical churches of Germany to a meeting in Berlin. His goal was to quell mounting criticism from the Christian community of the Nazi regime and its attempts to subvert the churches. Among those present at that meeting was a fiery young Lutheran pastor from the Berlin suburb of Dahlem whose name was Martin Niemöller. Hitler was amiable and deliberately reassuring as he sought the support of these prominent churchmen. He promised the pastors that the position of the church in Germany was safe and secure - that its legal protections, its tax exemptions, and state support would remain unchanged under the Nazi government. The brash young preacher had had enough. Today he would be called politically incorrect. Niemöller pushed to the front of the group to confront the chancellor directly and reject his casual consignment of Christians to social irrelevance. Standing face to face with Germany's ruler, the brash young pastor asserted: "Our concern, Herr Hitler, is not for the church. Jesus Christ will take care of His Church. Our concern is for the soul of our country." An embarrassed silence followed his remark and it was immediately evident that Niemöller spoke only for himself. His chagrined colleagues quickly shuffled him away from the front of the room. Noting their timid reaction, the dictator smiled as he replied, "The soul of Germany, you can leave that to me." Niemöller was subsequently arrested by the Gestapo for faithfully preaching the Word of God and standing against Hitler. He was what we would today call a celebrity. He was a national hero. He had been a

highly decorated U-boat commander in the First World War and only after the war did he enter the ministry. His arrest was controversial. The magistrate pleaded with Niemoller to end his attacks on the Nazi regime and upon the Fuhrer. He promised Niemoller immediate release, and the opportunity to return to his pulpit on that very day, if only he would agree to do so. Niemoller's reply was steadfast, "I cannot, and I will not be silent," he said, "because God is my Fuhrer." The morning after Pastor Martin Niemueller was arrested, the Lutheran chaplain was making his rounds in the city jail. As he entered Niemoller's cell he was astounded and dismayed to find his fellow clergyman sitting there under arrest. "My brother!" he exclaimed, "what did you do? Why are you here?" Niemoller, never at a loss for words, immediately reacted, "My brother, given what is happening in our country, why aren't you here?"

IV. Daniel was a man of courageous humility.

A. He never changed from the right course (Daniel 6:10). I love the wording in this verse. Speaking of Daniel after he and the entire kingdom were commanded not to pray to anyone but Darius, the Bible says he "prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

B. He was always learning (Daniel 9:2). All great people know they have never "arrived." Paul said it like this in Philippians 3:12: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

V. Daniel was a man who lived between two worlds.

Daniel 10:12, 13; 19-21. Daniel 12:3; Daniel 2:13, 2. Matthew 2:1, 2. Romans 1:18-20. Psalm 19:1-4; Psalm 8:3, 4. Judges 5:20. Daniel's prayer life activated the angels of heaven. Our Lord points this out in Matthew 18:10b: "...That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

The ancient Celtic Christians believed there were places where God was so close to earth and earth was so close to heaven that they called these places, "Thin Places." Jacob experienced this when he said in Genesis 28:16b, 17: "...Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Let us be so close to God that our prayers activate Heaven. May we live in such a way that our habitation becomes a "Thin Place."

