

Daniel: A Man Greatly Loved

Franklin Church of Christ
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November 18, 2007
AM Assembly

Introduction:

Sometimes I am jealous of Bible characters. For instance, in **Daniel 9**, Daniel had been praying and the angel, Gabriel, appears to him and talks to him about his prayers. In addition to that, in **Daniel 9:23; 10:11, 19**, Gabriel called Daniel a “man greatly loved.” At times, I wish I could have a personal encounter with God, Jesus or one of the angels to let me know exactly how I stand in God’s eyes. I would like to know if I am a man greatly loved or not. The reality, however, is I do not have to have a personal encounter. I can know how God feels about me based on what is revealed in scripture. I can examine a man like Daniel. If I compare at all to him, I know I too am greatly loved. If I don’t compare, then I have some work to do. Therefore, if we want to be greatly loved by God, we need to examine Daniel’s life and see how ours compares.

Discussion:

- I. This is not unconditional love offered to all, but a statement of God’s desire for Daniel.
 - A. The first problem these verses pose for us is knowing that God loves everyone unconditionally because He is love (**I John 4:7-8**). How can the text say Daniel is greatly loved as if he is set apart because of something about him? The reason is the word translated “love” here is not the one for our common concept of God’s love.
 1. The Hebrew word most related to our common concept of God’s love is *’ahab* (Strong’s H157). For instance, consider **Deuteronomy 4:37**. Another form is *’ahabah* (Strong’s H160). See **Deuteronomy 7:8**.
 2. The Hebrew word used in **Daniel 9:23; 10:11, 19** is *chemdah* (Strong’s H2532). Consider a few other usages of this word. **I Samuel 9:20**, in which it is translated “desirable.” **II Chronicles 20:25**, in which it is translated “precious.” **Psalms 106:24**, in which it is translated “pleasant.”
 - B. Therefore, we learn, this passage is not about an expression of the unconditional love God has for all mankind which caused Him to offer His Son as a sacrifice to save us all. Rather, it is an expression that Daniel is pleasant and precious to God. God desires Daniel. This is a statement of God’s acceptance of Daniel based upon Daniel’s life and action.
 - C. Do you see then what this passage demonstrates? Yes, God’s love is unconditional. He loves us all no matter what we have done and sacrificed His Son for us all because of that love. However, He does not view everyone as pleasant, precious and desirable. He does not accept everyone. God loves us all with that unconditional love, but He only blesses with salvation those who submit to His will and become desirable. This is why we need to examine Daniel’s life. Why was he pleasant, precious and desirable to God?
- II. Chapter 1—Daniel was willing to stand out in order to obey God.
 - A. We know the story. In **Daniel 1**, Daniel had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and carted thousands of miles away from his home. His name was changed and he did nothing. He was enrolled in Babylonian education and he let that slide. However, when it came lunch time, they wanted him to eat food that was unlawful. He refused (**Daniel 1:8**).
 - B. His refusal was dangerous for him and even for the eunuch who had shown him so much kindness (**vs. 10**). However, Daniel and his three friends insisted. Daniel developed a ten day test and the eunuch agreed (**vss. 12-13**). We already know how the story ended. Daniel and his three friends looked better than all the other captives who ate the food (**vs. 15**).
 - C. What always catches my attention is all the other captives who didn’t take Daniel’s stand. Here was Daniel, far from home, in a strange place, with strange customs. Everyone else was just going along with the new regime. Four men stood alone against everyone else. Despite the danger of rebelling against their new ruler... Despite the influence of everyone else who feared rocking the boat, Daniel and his three friends stood out in order to obey God.
 - D. If we want to be precious, pleasant and desirable to God, we must be willing to stand out and be different. We must be willing to obey God no matter what anyone else is doing or what anyone else threatens. **Romans 12:2** says we are not to be like the world, but be transformed. We are to be different.

III. Chapter 2—Daniel relied on and confessed God.

- A. In **Daniel 2**, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream he wanted interpreted. Yet none of his wise men could do so. Finally, in his anger, Nebuchadnezzar decreed all these wise men should be executed (**Daniel 2:12**). Daniel did not act out of fear. He did not act rashly in panic. Rather, he boldly faced the king asking permission to extend his life for a time and then allow him to come back with the dream and its interpretation (**vss. 14-16**).
- B. Daniel did not return to his house and fret over what they would do. He did not try to plan an escape so he and his three friends could get away. Instead, he told his friends to seek mercy from God (**vss. 17-18**). Daniel and his friends relied on God to save them, not on themselves. They did not rely on guesswork or trickery but on God's mercy.
- C. Further, when Daniel knew the dream and its interpretation and came into the king's presence, when he had every opportunity to act as though he was somehow special, instead, he told the king exactly why he knew the dream. He told the king about his God and how his God had revealed the dream (**vss. 27-28**).
- D. None of us has anyone breathing down our necks threatening to kill us. However, all of us have worries about life. If we want to be pleasant, precious and desirable to God, we must rely on Him. **Matthew 6:31-33** says we should not be worried about what we will eat, drink or wear. Instead we should seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness and rely on God to take care of us. Further, if we want to be pleasant, precious and desirable to God, we must confess Him before others. **Matthew 10:32-33** says Jesus will only confess us before His Father if we confess Him to others. We need to tell others what God has done and acknowledge Him in all our ways, especially regarding salvation.

IV. Chapter 4—Daniel did not withhold the truth or God's warning.

- A. In **Daniel 4**, Nebuchadnezzar had another dream. Once again, none of the wise men could interpret it. However, Daniel, by the grace of God, could. Once again, Daniel relied on God. Once again, Daniel confessed and gave God the glory. However, the important point in this story is how this dream differed from the first. In the dream of **Daniel 2**, Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom were the head of gold. They were the greatest of kings and kingdoms. It was all good news about Nebuchadnezzar. This dream was a rebuke and a prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's coming punishment. He was proud and had not acknowledged the working of God. For seven periods of time (we do not know if this was days, months, seasons, years or a figurative reference to the fullness of time), Nebuchadnezzar would be as an animal, roaming the countryside, grazing on the grass.
- B. Specifically notice Daniel's response in **Daniel 4:19**. Daniel didn't like this portent. He certainly didn't want it to be about Nebuchadnezzar. I think Daniel would have preferred to say nothing. He would have preferred to gloss over the whole dream and move on. He didn't want to be the one to tell Nebuchadnezzar what was coming. Nevertheless, he did (**Daniel 4:20-26**). Further, he offered a warning showing how Nebuchadnezzar could avoid the punishment (**Daniel 4:27**).
- C. I don't know about you, but I feel this way all the time. I have friends and family and I don't want to be the one to tell them of their coming punishments. I don't want to be the one who rocks the boat and says everything is not alright. I don't want to be the one to let them know they are in danger of being lost. Think about how that could negatively impact my relationship with them. However, if we want to be precious, pleasant and desirable to God, then we have to be willing to share the truth. We have to warn others. We have to let them know what God says about their future. In **II Corinthians 5:11**, Paul said we must persuade others because we know the fear of the Lord. No doubt, we do not have to be mean and malevolent about this. We do not have to be harsh and hateful about it. Consider Daniel's words. He was tactful and gentle about it. He was not happy to let Nebuchadnezzar know of his coming punishment. Yet he did it anyway.

V. Chapter 5—Daniel chose God's reward over man's.

- A. In **Daniel 5**, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar, was king. In the midst of a hedonistic party desecrating the utensils of the Jerusalem temple, a hand appeared and wrote four words on the wall—*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*. No one could explain the meaning of the words. Once again, Daniel was called upon to interpret the cryptic message of God.

- B. However, take special note of **Daniel 5:7, 16**. Belshazzar offered the highest reward of men to whoever would interpret this message. Yet, Daniel was not interested in the rewards offered by men. In **Daniel 5:17**, he told Belshazzar to keep his gifts and reward someone else. Daniel was a man of faith. He did not seek material goods. He sought to obey his God. He was far more concerned about the rewards of God than the rewards of men.
- C. There is a second aspect to this. Daniel did not view serving God as a means to material wealth. He was not trying to keep one foot in heaven and one foot on earth. He would not interpret the signs for pay. He would interpret the words because that was the obedient and God honoring thing to do. Yes, I know he did receive the reward anyway. The point is he did not offer this interpretation for material prosperity. He did it to honor God.
- D. According to **Matthew 6:19-21**, we are taught to value the heavenly things that cannot be destroyed. All of man's rewards fade and wear away. In **Matthew 6:1**, Jesus explained if we are doing our good deeds to be seen and rewarded by men, God will not reward us. Yes, like Daniel, when we serve God, we may receive honor and material blessings from men. However, if that is our goal, we are not serving God. As Paul said in **Colossians 3:2**, we must keep our mind set on things above not on the things below. If we want to be precious, pleasant and desirable to God, we need to be more interested in God's rewards than man's.

VI. Chapter 6—Daniel was trustworthy and loyal, both to men and God.

- A. In **Daniel 6**, the other officials in Darius's court became jealous. Daniel stood above them all and he was being honored by Darius for that. So, the other officials decided to bring Daniel down. At first, they tried to bring about a scandal (**Daniel 6:4**). However, they could find no grounds for complaint against him. They could not find an error where Daniel purposefully did something wrong. They couldn't even find where Daniel had been negligent. They wanted to have some kind of legal proceeding against him, but they simply couldn't. Daniel was loyal to his boss. He was loyal to his job. He was trustworthy in his relationships. He was the ideal employee.
- B. However, it didn't stop there. The other officials knew only one way they could bring Daniel down. Make praying to anyone other than Darius illegal for an entire month. What I find most amazing is they knew Daniel would get in trouble. Even Daniel's enemies knew he was so devoted to his God that he would pray to Jehovah anyway. The text says when Daniel knew about the decree (**vs.10**), he prayed anyway. Daniel was loyal to his God. He was a trustworthy servant who could be expected to obey God above men, no matter what.
- C. If we want to be pleasant, precious and desirable to God, we have to be trustworthy and loyal to men and to God. We need to be people who do all our work as if it is for the Lord, just as Paul commanded servants to do in **Ephesians 6:5-7**. Further, we need to be absolutely loyal and trustworthy to God. No matter what men threaten, we must be willing to stand up and serve the Lord as the apostles did in **Acts 4:19-20; 5:29**.

Conclusion:

No doubt, Daniel was unconditionally loved by God as are all men. However, Daniel was precious to God. He was pleasant to God. He was a man God desired. Therefore, he was a man greatly loved by God. One of the greatest compliments I believe I have ever heard is found in **Hebrews 11:16**. It speaks of the people of faith and says, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God" (ESV). That is what Gabriel was saying about Daniel. God was not ashamed to be called Daniel's God. I want to hear that same compliment some day. I don't have to have an epiphany with Gabriel. I simply need to examine men like Daniel and live like them. How do we compare?