

Daniel

Daniel 1.

"Handfuls of Purpose" Part 3 (Miscellaneous, chapters 15 - 30).

Let fall for eager Gleaners.

Thirty Addresses on Various Scripture Truths and Incidents

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CHAPTER 20 — DANIEL; OR, DEVOTEDNESS IN DIFFICULT DAYS.

There is great profit to be found in the study of Daniel's life. It is not Daniel as a prophet I turn your attention to, but Daniel as a saint, and a servant of God. You and I are not prophets. We are all saints. Daniel was a servant, and, through infinite grace, God has given us also the privilege of being His servants. We get the moral features brought out in this book that should ever mark the servant in a day of ruin, and confusion, among God's people.

We are constantly reminded of the ruin, and the broken state of the Church. So patent is this that many a heart has said, "I will give it all up." My dear brother, you may be a Daniel in this day of confusion and ruin, if you only have faith and purpose like him. Ten points strike me in Daniel's history.

1. A SEPARATE MAN,

Nothing could exceed the ruin in Daniel's day. God's people were in captivity. His house was destroyed, and the vessels thereof adorned the idol temples of Babylon. Daniel and his friends were captives in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar, a godless monarch, who cared nothing for God or for His people. Of these captives, of royal and noble parentage, the king had selected a certain number. "And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; children in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were, of the children of Judah — Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah" (Dan. 1: 3-6). They had to undergo a three years' curriculum at the college of Babylon, and were to live during their worldly pupilage, with all the surroundings of idolatry, and subject to immense temptation. There is no person exempt from temptation, but I conceive that Daniel and his fellow-students were subject to peculiar temptation, to drop their faith and their Nazariteship.

Now, beloved brethren, where Daniel made his first stand, is where we must begin. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Dan. 1: 8). Daniel "*purposed in his heart.*" It is a fine thing to be a man of purpose. And I tell you what it is, you are no use, and you will never be of any use, unless you are a man of purpose. Barnabas, when he visited the young converts at Antioch, "Exhorted them all, that with *purpose of heart* they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11: 23). Paul could say to Timothy, "Thou hast fully known my *purpose*" (2 Tim. 3: 10). I seek to cheer the young. Be men and women of purpose. So here, "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." In plain language, he was a separate man. He was a self-denying, separate man, and an obedient man too.

This man had learned, I do not doubt, to read the Scriptures. He knew that the king's meat had been offered to idols, and he also knew God's mind as to the fat, and the blood. "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Ye shall eat no manner of fat of ox, or of sheep, or of goat. And the fat of the beast that dieth of itself, and the fat of that which is torn with beasts, may be used in any other use; but ye shall in no wise eat of it. For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, even the soul that eateth it shall be cut off from his people. Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings. Whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people" (Lev. 7: 23-27).

Then, moreover, he had read the sixth chapter of Numbers, where he learned that there was an opportunity for him of being a Nazarite in a day of difficulty, by being out and out for God. He would rise to that privilege, so he declined the king's wine, as well as his meat. He would deny himself. He doubtless had carefully studied Leviticus 11 and 20. You know, what we feed on makes us. I am not talking only of the body now, but what the soul is occupied with. The first thing I notice is that he refuses entirely that which nature would have accepted and enjoyed. I have no doubt the devil said, "There is no use whatever in your setting up to be a Nazarite in this day of ruin; you are in Babylon, do as Babylon does." I have a purpose in my heart, replies Daniel, and he stuck to it.

Having refused the king's portion, Daniel chooses, and is allowed pulse and water. His action emboldens his fellows. They join him, and we find God blesses them. "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (Dan. 1: 17). Their education is from God.

2. AN ENLIGHTENED MAN.

"Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm" (Dan. 2: 18-20). The moment you set yourself to really follow the Lord, it is wonderful what light the Lord will give you. Wisdom and knowledge will be vouchsafed to you in abundance, for you will be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," and will "increase in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1: 9, 10). "Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams," and at the end of the three years at college is tested. The examination day came, and these four young men came out at the top of the class. When they came in, the king communed with them. They had apparently to go through an examination before the king.

I believe we meet with examination days when perhaps we least expect them. Where my soul is, and what I have been occupied with, really is declared then. The place these captive students get is a great encouragement. The world is before you, and I know very well the temptation it is to Christian young men and women to rather fall in with its ways. Sometimes they think it is necessary in order to get on in the business they have in hand. To me it is very nice to see that the godliest of the lot were at the top of the class in Babylon. There is no gainsaying it, for "in *all matters of wisdom and understanding*, that the king inquired of them, he found them *ten times better* than all the magicians and astrologers that were *in all his realm*" (Dan. 2: 20). You give me a downright devoted saint, and you will find, in the long run, that he is ten times better than the most instructed worldly man, because he has light from God.

3. A PRAYERFUL MAN.

When you come to the second chapter you find Daniel in difficulties. The king had asked the most preposterous thing. He called on his wise men to recall and interpret a long-forgotten

dream. It was a dream of many years ago manifestly (Dan. 2: 1). All the wise men were to be cut off if they could not declare it. "The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain (Dan. 2: 10-13). Unless they could meet this difficulty there was nothing for them but the sword. But we find a very nice thing. Daniel goes to the king for time, and to God for light. "Then Daniel went in and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (vers. 16-18). In plain language, beloved friends, Daniel got his brethren together, and they had a prayer-meeting. Are there difficulties in your way? Have a prayer-meeting. That is my advice to you. He tells his brethren the difficulty, and gravity of the situation, and then says, We must have a prayer-meeting.

Well, what is the result? "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven" (Dan. 2: 19). And what is the next thing? Away goes Daniel to tell his brethren? No! You have beautiful order in his soul.

4. A PRAISEFUL MAN.

He has a worship-meeting next. He blesses God. And you will find his soul goes out to God in a most beautiful way. "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter" (Dan. 2: 20-23), Oh, how his soul revelled in what God was. What a true hold that man had of God. How his soul was entranced with the blessedness of having to do with God. "Thou hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee." Mark that little word "we," *will* you? He had sought the fellowship, you see, of his brethren in the matter of prayer, and in his thanks to God he takes his brethren in. He has deeply the sense in his soul of the blessedness of having to do with God.

You have here then a separate man, a devoted man, a man whose ways are suitable to the Lord, and one who is intelligent in God's ways. As a result he can tell the king exactly what is coming.

5. A PROSPEROUS MAN.

Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king" (Dan. 2: 48, 49). Rewarded, and exalted himself, he does not forget those who were at the prayer-meeting. Everything is shared with them.

What a beautiful saint Daniel was! To me there is something very charming in his character. He reminds me in this way of the apostle Paul. There was nothing small about either Daniel, or Paul. How little we are! What miserable pettiness and selfishness we often betray. We have been called to the enjoyment of the fulness of God's things, and to always continue sharing these things with others is of immense importance.

Daniel was a prayerful and praiseful man, and then, sharing all he received with his brethren, he prospered (*see* also Dan. 6: 28). Here is the secret of a prospering saint. Mark, if I have light, it is not for myself, it is for others. We are only vessels, and God puts the light in us, hence, whether it be the gospel, or the truth connected with the Church, we are responsible to circulate and pass it on. And I believe, the truth that you and I may glean and gather, if we do not use and circulate it, will soon moulder in our very souls. We become the subjects of spiritual dry rot. Many of God's dear children are suffering from this disease. They acquire truth, but no one else benefits.

Why? They have been so busy with themselves — so self-occupied, so self-absorbed — that they really have no time, and no heart to think of others. They keep, only eventually really to lose — for it dries up — what they should have been passing on. I think Daniel gives us a beautiful lesson in that respect.

6. A FAITHFUL MAN.

The fifth and sixth chapters go together in illustrating this point. In the fifth he is brought in before King Belshazzar; and he is faithful indeed, as he foretells his doom. I am not speaking now of Daniel as a prophet, but as a saint. He is a fearless and faithful man, as he exposes the king's sins, and tells Belshazzar what his end is to be. Look at his independence. How really independent is God's man in every day. Nor does he want any reward. "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another" (Dan. 5: 17). He does not want the world's gifts. Not one bit. He is dependent on the Lord alone. He receives everything from the Lord for himself, and he has something for everybody else down here. He is faithful to man in the fifth chapter, and, even so, made "the third ruler in the kingdom," which ended that same night. How beautifully faithful he is to God in the sixth chapter we shall now consider.

7. A HATED MAN.

Daniel's faithfulness, trustworthiness, and consequent promotion, led to his being well hated. I believe, beloved friends, to be thoroughly hated for Christ's sake is a wonderful thing.

When a man is here really for God, and the light, the truth, and the grace of God are streaming through that man, he is sure to be hated, and if he be hated for Christ's sake, let him thank God. "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets" (Luke 6: 22, 23). This the apostles did, for we read: "When they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5: 40, 41). And again, it is written, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1: 29). The apostle Peter also says, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" (1 Peter 3: 14). "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified" (1 Peter 4: 13, 14).

The root of the hatred against Daniel was his ever-increasing promotion by the successive monarchs he served so faithfully. His history in connection with Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus embraces seventy years. His exaltation commenced by Nebuchadnezzar making him a judge (Dan. 2: 49), Belshazzar made him prime minister (Dan. 5: 29), and Darius continued him in office, with the added post of what I may call the king's accountant-general. "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was first; that the princes might *give accounts unto them*, and the king should have no damage" (Dan. 6: 1, 2). This lofty position he received because he was so trusted.

"Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm" (Dan. 6: 3). An excellent spirit was in him. That is a very nice feature, beloved. A man's spirit is infinitely more valuable than his communications. I may say, by God's help, many a nice thing, and you may hear, enjoy, and then forget it. But if I have done anything nasty to you, you will never forget it. Oh, to be a Daniel in spirit! We shall never be prophets. We are not called by God in that way, but we can all cultivate an "excellent spirit."

Daniel was not only a man of excellent spirit, but a man of practical righteousness, for his accounts were all right. Are your accounts all right? His moral uprightness and integrity, in all matters of trust, enhanced his value in the eyes of King Darius, who "thought to set him over the whole realm." This raised the hatred of the Chaldeans. "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him" (Dan. 6: 4). They thought to trip him up, but "could find none occasion nor fault." A man of excellent spirit, and faithful, and no error or fault found in him. What a lovely character! Oh, how like Christ! "I find no fault in this man," was said about the blessed Lord, and here is His servant morally like Him.

Daniel's exaltation by the king does not exalt him in himself. The higher he goes, the lower he is in his own eyes. Blessed man!

Foiled in their effort to lower him in matters relating to the kingdom, his enemies take another course. "Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore King Darius signed the writing and the decree" (Dan. 6: 5-9). What effect has this edict on Daniel? None whatever! He does not alter his course a hair's-breadth, but having faith in God, you will find that he is

8. A PRESERVED MAN.

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and *his windows being open* in his chamber *towards Jerusalem*, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforesaid*. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God" (Dan. 6: 10, 11). Daniel's action was based on the Word of God. He had heard God's Word saying that if His people were in captivity they were to pray to Him, and to look toward His house. "Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; if they return to thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee" (2 Chr. 6: 37-39). Daniel acts on this scripture. He does not shut his windows, nor increase, nor lessen his petitions: he is just that day what he had been every day before. He was a very even saint. It was not the great difficulty that took him to his knees thrice daily. It was his custom, and of course his enemies found him in prayer. What a happy thing for saints to be known as prayerful, and to be found thus upon their knees.

Well then, he is cast into the den of lions. "Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake, and said unto Daniel, Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him; and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king

spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" (Dan. 6: 16-20).

The point of this chapter is that the devoted man will be the delivered man. I will guarantee that Daniel had the best of it that night. I believe Darius spent a wretched night, fasting, and sleepless. I think if you and I had gone down to the den of lions we should have found Daniel sleeping soundly. Faith in God, and a good conscience are rare bed-fellows, specially in a lion's den! The king spake in the morning with "a lamentable voice," as he said, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" How cheerily Daniel answered here: "O king, live forever! My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of

hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God"(Dan. 6: 21-23). He is a delivered man, and in the end of this chapter you find he is a prosperous man. "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (Dan. 6: 28).

When you come to Daniel 9 you find that he is unmistakably

9. A MAN IDENTIFIED WITH GOD'S PEOPLE.

Chapter 9 shows us Daniel again in prayer, and deep humiliation before God, on account of the sins and transgressions of His people. "In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments" "Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. O Lord. hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (Dan. 9: 2-5, 17-19). Nothing could exceed the moral beauty of this prayer. I beg you to read it all carefully. The man who is most clear of the sins confessed, is the one who confesses them most really to God. The sins of all Israel he owns as his; and while speaking in prayer is visited by Gabriel, and sweetly instructed as to Israel's full restoration (*see* Dan. 9: 21-27). He really eats the sin-offering before God.

10. A MAN GREATLY BELOVED.

In Daniel 10 you will find he gets a wonderful revelation from the Lord. "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphas: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision for the men that were with me saw not the vision but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling" (Dan. 10: 5-11). How near the Lord comes to him, as he says unto him, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved!" What a touching address. He entered into the sense of how deeply the Lord loved him. The sense of the love of God is deep joy to the soul. "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved." What a thrill must have gone through his heart as he heard it.

God sets great store by a character like Daniel's. That is shown in Ezekiel 14. I do not know if you have ever noticed it. It is beautiful the way in which God speaks of His servants (ver. 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" (Ezek. 14: 14-20). Noah was a just man, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Daniel was greatly beloved. He was a man whose outward character was spotless. And Job spake the thing that was right about God.

I commend this aspect of Daniel to your study. just quietly work out in your own hearts the moral line that is marked through this book, and see how preserved is the man who is devoted, and separate, and how God can instruct, use, and comfort him. And the Lord give us beloved to be encouraged. I admit that there are great difficulties on all hands. But you and I may be little Daniels in the spot where we live, although the Church is all in ruin. May the Lord give us grace to be such for His own name's sake!