

Features of Faithfulness

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The subject of this short paper is not the prophetic content of Daniel — that must be left in more competent hands. The book in its opening chapters, clearly shows the moral features which are of necessity to mark the people of God if He is to be glorified in times of failure and crisis.

The defection of king Hezekiah (Isaiah 39) resulted in the pronouncement by God that Judah would be carried away, with their possessions, into Babylon, and here we find the fulfilment of that word. Sadly we read "part of the vessels of the house of God . . . carried . . . into the land of Shinar" (Daniel 1: 2). Precious vessels, hallowed for the service of God's house, now found in the house of a pagan's god! Shinar is introduced in Scripture (see Genesis 10, 11 and 14) as marked by rebellion; man seeking to challenge the rights of God and make a name for himself; and a kingdom of war and conflict. This is the character of the scene which, in God's governmental dealings, His people were found in. Do we not find similar conditions surrounding us today?

In such circumstances devoid of true morality, features delightful to the heart of God shine out in the lives of the four men mentioned in the early chapters of Daniel. Their names are of great significance. Daniel — God is judge (we shall refer to this later); Hananiah — God is gracious; Azariah — the support of God; Mishael — who is there like God? They were of the royal seed of Judah, of noble birth and lineage; dignity was manifest in their every movement and word, and yet they were marked by prayer, dependence and faith in God. In every circumstance whether testing or otherwise they moved in true fellowship together, experiencing thus full assurance and confidence in the will of God, in His grace and support. Their lives were lived in relation to the *God of heaven* — and as constantly breathing such an atmosphere they were enabled to refuse the meat and drink of the king. Thus their responsible pathways (indicated in the *ten days*) were marked by attractiveness and formation. Above all else they rejoiced in the knowledge of God's *ability* and were rewarded not by His *protection* only but by His very *presence* with them in a time of fiery testing.

What marvellous results followed! These three young men had experienced the constancy of God's *grace* in their pathways; they had known His *support* and presence in the extreme trial and testing they endured; but above all else they were a channel through which was manifested the *power and greatness of God Himself*. Great indeed was the effect of their testimony and demeanour upon Nebuchadnezzar as he admitted that, powerful as he was, his word *could* be changed (Dan. 3: 28) and his subsequent testimony to God. He had much still to learn, much to be stripped of, but the first few verses and the last verse of Daniel 4 (his *last* utterance in the book) show the change of heart produced through the faithful walk and testimony of Daniel and his friends.

Briefly we notice the knowledge possessed by Daniel as to God's *judgment* in relation to the whole of the age. The dreams of Nebuchadnezzar; the interpretation of God's pronouncement of judgment in Belshazzar; his assurance that the word of Darius, which the law of the Medes and Persians insisted could not be revoked, would indeed be set aside by the command of the "living God." We rejoice in the witness of such men, and challenge ourselves as to whether we are found true to our name as Christians (Christ's ones) whatever the path may be. The word "witness" is "martyr." Suffering may be known — but God is faithful. We in our day know His *unalterable judgment* in regard to every matter; we know the sufficiency of his grace; and in the gift of the Holy Spirit we are assured of his *presence and support*.

The power of God; the grace of Christ our Lord; the abiding presence of the Comforter!

May we all as realizing constantly the blessedness and power of the Godhead towards us, so walk that our testimony before all is "Who is like *our God*?"