

05–13–2020 Daniel 6:10–18

Read Daniel 6:10–18 in your favorite translation. I will print the NET–2 translation.

10 When Daniel realized that a written decree had been issued, he entered his home, where the windows in his upper room opened toward Jerusalem. Three times daily he was kneeling and offering prayers and thanks to his God just as he had been accustomed to do previously. 11 Then those officials who had gone to the king came by collusion and found Daniel praying and asking for help before his God. 12 So they approached the king and said to him, “Did you not issue an edict to the effect that for the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human other than to you, O king, would be thrown into a den of lions?” The king replied, “That is correct, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed.” 13 Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the edict that you issued. Three times daily he offers his prayer.”

14 When the king heard this, he was very upset and began thinking about how he might rescue Daniel. Until late afternoon he was struggling to find a way to rescue him. 15 Then those men came by collusion to the king and said to him, “Recall, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no edict or decree that the king issues can be changed.” 16 So the king gave the order, and Daniel was brought and thrown into a den of lions. The king consoled Daniel by saying, “Your God whom you continually serve will rescue you!” 17 Then a stone was brought and placed over the opening to the den. The king sealed it with his signet ring and with those of his nobles so that nothing could be changed with regard to Daniel. 18 Then the king departed to his palace. But he spent the night without eating, and no diversions were brought to him. He was unable to sleep.

COMMENTS:

Our reading today reveals one of the qualities which Daniel possessed that I most admire: his consistency. He had been praying to Yahweh three times daily throughout his life. No matter what the threats were, he continued his devotion to God. He was not one of those who did it only if he felt like it, or do it one day, skip two or three days.

As close as he was to Darius, he apparently did not know the king had been tricked into his edict by the flattery of those who hated Daniel. He did not rush to him and try to change his mind or plan a protest. He just remained faithful to his God. The custom of Jews who were not in Jerusalem was for them to turn to the direction of the temple.

This custom was established through the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple (cf. 1 Kings 8:30, “...pray toward this place.”). This would have been especially clear to Daniel who knew many would have an opportunity to return to Israel.

For the wealthy Jews, many had an upper room which was frequently used for entertaining others or as personal study. The open windows of these upper rooms is because of the warm climate in Babylon.

Daniel displays his humility by kneeling when he prays. This is not the only posture for prayer we find in the Bible. However, it reflects the custom of kneeling in the presence of God or the king. Daniel is still kneeling at his old age (he is at least in his 80’s by now), something which I would now find difficulty doing if I didn’t have a pillow or cushion on which to place my knees.

Now the plot is completed. The disgruntled people who wanted Daniel removed, approached the king to inform him how he was failing to honor the king and praying three times a day to Yahweh. When Darius realized it was Daniel they were reporting, he was upset.

This is an example of a decision which has now produced “unintended consequences.” That is a frequent result of careless decisions we make. Darius then begins to search for a way to rescue

Daniel. Those who plotted against Daniel recognized the king's affection for him. They reminded him that his edict could not be changed.

Darius yields and place him in the Lion's den. Now the king consoles Daniel saying, "Your God whom you continually serve will rescue you!" Like the tomb of Jesus, a stone is placed over the opening and it is sealed. Sealing the lion's den was as useless as the sealing of Jesus tomb.

The king went back to the palace, but he had no appetite, nor did he get any sleep. Tomorrow we will come to the end of this story and the first half of Daniel, the historical record.

REFLECTION QUESTION: When you are making decisions, you are not captive to the Law of the Medes and Persians. But when we make decisions in haste, we can easily end up with "unintended consequences." For example, when School Boards arranged the time for schools to start and how to make the use of a fleet of buses, efficiency of the bus schedule was the main concern. Then we discovered that learning is affected by the time people start school. Now we are trying to add in concern for optimal learning with efficiency of the bus fleet. I'm certain many of you can think of how "unintended consequences" have arisen from some of your decisions. It is good to ask that question when you face a decision.