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In recent weeks we have been reflecting on the Person, the Name and the Blood of Christ, and that in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2.3). In the light of these central truths we have identified various Christ-denying “foistings” occurring in our society, such as homosexuality and Islam, along with the efforts made to silence any opposition by the misuse of the word “phobia” and the instant branding of opponents as hate-filled extremists. We have seen our need for a balanced Christian response to all this: within the context of God’s love we are to show our firm rejection of sinfulness in whatever form, starting with ourselves, linked with an informed concern over what is going on; and arising from that informed concern comes appropriate practical action.

In his youth Daniel was carried away from his home to exile in Babylon in 606 BC. We read that he and his companions quickly “made a mark”, by having the courage to refuse the king’s meat and drink and remain with the diet they were used to (Daniel 1.5-16), and then by being recognised as possessing (God-given) “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom” with Daniel himself being particularly singled out (1.4,17-20). Sure enough, Daniel was soon in action, revealing and interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of “the great image” in Chapter 2 – (consisting for us now, in its extraordinarily accurate foreknowledge, as one the main prophetic passages within God’s Word which leaves liberal dismissers of scriptural prophecy completely flummoxed).

But we note Daniel’s habits – here was no show-off with a “just-look-at-me” attitude! With the threat of death hanging over him and many others (2.13), Daniel “answered with counsel and wisdom” (2.14a); he met with his companions “that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret” (2.18a), and when God revealed the secret of the dream. “Daniel blessed the God of heaven” in beautiful words of praise (2.19-23). He then spoke with courage and truthfulness to the king about the dream, and Nebuchadnezzar certainly “got the message” (2.24-49).

The dangers continued. In Chapter 3 the refusal of Daniel’s companions to bow down to the idolatrous image, (precisely what we are being expected to do before various false images today), landed them in the fiery furnace, where they were joined by the fourth Figure (vv 23-25); and again Nebuchadnezzar got the message (vv 28-30). In Chapter 4 is a second prophetic passage of crucial importance, about “the seven times” (vv 19-27). In a bout of pride this all came precisely and suddenly true for Nebuchadnezzar (vv 28-33), and afterwards once again this earthly king praised, extolled and honoured “the King of heaven” (vv 34-37).

Then we come to Belshazzar and “the fingers of a man’s hand writing on the wall” (Chapter 5). Daniel was “brought in before the king” (v 13), and the prophecy was fulfilled that very night (v 30).

In Chapter 6 Daniel’s enemies, driven by jealousy, set their trap against him (vv 1-5), and Darius signed the decree (vv 6-9). We simply read – “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and

prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (v 10). In other words Daniel just carried on, in faith, prayer and obedience.

Of course his accusers quickly found Daniel, as they knew they would do, and that looked like “game, set and match” for them! But yet again the Lord God honoured Daniel for his simple faith and his simple faithfulness, and granted him wonderful deliverance (vv 21-23); not so for Daniel's accusers (v 24).

What an example the Lord has given us in Daniel and his companions: they stayed faithful come what may, and therein lies the key to any practical action we may feel led to take these days as we stand up for God's Word and ways, and stand up against sinful foistings and false accusations.

In 1873 Philp Bliss wrote the hymn “Standing by a purpose true”, with its rousing tune and famous refrain, “Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone! Dare to have a purpose firm! And dare to make it known!”.

Thankfully, because of Christian fellowship and support, we rarely have to stand quite alone in the Lord's service, but please God we are ready to do that if necessary. But even then of course we are still not actually alone – (eg, Psalm 139.1-10 / Luke 21.14-15 / Acts 18.9-10 / Romans 8.35-39 / Hebrews 13.5b / I Peter 5.6-7 / ...).

We are always in the presence of the God, who loves us in and through His Son Jesus Christ. Though feeble may be our Daniel-type efforts, we rest in God's gracious promise - “... for them that honour me, I will honour ...” (I Samuel 2.30b).

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