

Life: Act faithfully

November 6, 2015

- *The Bible Studies for Life* lesson for Nov. 22 focuses on Daniel 6:6-10, 13-16, 19-22.

At the beginning of the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, Tom Hank's character, Captain Miller, participates in the storming of Omaha Beach on D-Day. He finds himself at a large metal obstacle designed to keep armored tanks from landing on the beach.

A soldier yells at Captain Miller that he's with a demolition unit there to clear the obstacles and make a hole for the tanks. Miller points to the lunacy of the thinking when he says, "The armor is foundering in the channel." The situation looked like no tanks would be able to land on the beach.

The soldier pointedly replies: "Orders, sir. I'm clearing this one." Nothing short of a bullet was going to stop him from carrying out his mission.

Daniel 3 addressed issue of standing courageously and refusing to compromise. This lesson from Daniel 6 emphasizes doing what is right in the face of opposition. Daniel, like the soldier in the movie, acted faithfully.

Nothing should deter us from our faithful worship and walk with God (Daniel 6:6-10)

In Daniel 5, the Persians took over the Babylonian Empire and executed King Belshazzar. To administrate such a vast empire, the Persians divided their realm into areas administrated by satraps. As one of these administrators, Daniel excelled. His proficiency caused considerable jealousy among the other satraps.

The jealous administrators sought ways to discredit Daniel, but they could find nothing. He consistently showed honesty and integrity in all of his life. So, they decided upon a plot that would use Daniel's own faith against him. Ironically, this same faith led him to a life of integrity.

The plot involved convincing Darius to order the only acceptable prayers allowed in the land would have to be addressed to him alone for a 30-day period. The king agreed.

How could Darius agree to such a law? Either Darius viewed himself as divine or believed he alone represented the deities in the empire.

When Daniel learned of the decree, he went home and prayed. His usual practice was to pray three times a day. Daniel didn't rush home to pray about his current situation. He went home and followed his usual practice. He already was "prayed up" for any occasion. The king's decree did not disturb him to the point of altering his pattern of prayer. What tremendous faith he had.

Faithfulness to God often results in opposition (Daniel 6:13-16)

Daniel's pattern of prayer led him right into the trap his adversaries had set for him. They testified to the king Daniel had violated the royal decree. This news upset the king who favored Daniel. A man of such integrity never is easy to find, and Darius did not want any harm to come to Daniel.

As much as the king may have wanted to rescue Daniel, he could not. The decree was binding even on the king. He could not rescind it. Daniel would have to be punished by being thrown into the lion's den. Only divine intervention could save Daniel.

In verse 18, the king spent the night without any food or festivities. He was upset about Daniel. He experienced a sleepless night and evidently endured a worse time than Daniel did in the lion's den.

What did the king do in those sleepless hours? Would he have prayed? Ironically, according to his own order, he could have only prayed to himself, and at the same time, he knew he could do nothing to save Daniel. He could not answer his own prayer.

God uses our faithfulness and integrity to point to him (Daniel 6:19-22)

At first light, the king went to the lion's den to discover Daniel's fate. He called out to Daniel, but he didn't ask him if he was still alive. Instead, he asked if his God had rescued him. The king knew Daniel could not have survived without divine intervention.

Daniel responded accordingly. He didn't recount his night with the lions describing how he had to stay alert and avoid their gnashing teeth and slashing claws. No, he simply said, "My God sent his angel" (v. 22).

He added God found him innocent of any wrongdoing. Also, Daniel noted his innocence before the king. Although he may have violated the letter of the king's law, Daniel didn't violate Darius' goal of having Daniel continue to serve his administration with integrity.

In the apparent conflict of laws, Daniel remained dedicated to God in his actions no matter what the result of those actions might be. He showed a willingness to pay the cost of discipleship. In fact, Daniel had been preparing his whole life for such an occasion as this. Maybe not specifically, but in general, he was prepared for any attack upon his faith.

In exile, Daniel experienced the presence of God. He witnessed God's mighty hand saving him time and time again from situations where his life was endangered. He trusted fully in God.

Also, Daniel lived a holy life. Living as an exile, his lifestyle would have been constantly under scrutiny. He had to live a holy life to gain any

respect from those who held power over him.

Finally, Daniel's faith in God and his resultant lifestyle became a tremendous witness to powers of the day. Many times, the monarchs of Babylon and Persia recognized the power of Daniel's God and gave him the proper credit and glory.

Do we live as Daniel? Can we see direct evidence of God's powerful existence among us? Do we live an exemplary lifestyle before others to the extent that they would describe us as holy? If not, why not? Are we living on mission all day every day?