

BIBLE CHARACTERS

by

D. L. Moody

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CHAPTER 7

THE DEN OF LIONS.

"Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions"
(Daniel 6:16)

There must have been great excitement in the city then: all Babylon knew that this man was not going to swerve. They knew very well that this old statesman was a man of iron will; and that it was not at all likely he would yield. The lions den had few terrors to him. He would rather be in the lions den with GOD, than out of it without Him. And it is a thousand times better, friends, to be in the lions den with GOD, and hold to principle - than to be out of it, and have money, but no principle. I pity those men who have gained their money dishonestly; I pity those men who have obtained their positions in life dishonestly; I pity any politician who has acquired his office dishonestly - how his conscience will lash him at times! And how the Word of GOD lashes such! Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. It does not pay to be false; it pays to be true. It is best to be honest; even if it means having very little money in our pocket, and very little position in the world. It is best to have GOD with us, and to know that we are on the right side.

I venture to say that man Daniel was worth more than any other man Darius had in his empire - yes, worth more than forty thousand men who wanted to get him out of the way. He was true to the king. He prayed for him; he loved him; and he did for that king everything he could that did not conflict with the law of his GOD.

And now the spies rush off to the king, and cry,

O Darius, live forever! Do you know there is a man in your kingdom who will not obey you?

A man who wont obey me! Who is he?

Why, that man Daniel. That Hebrew whom you set over us. He persists in calling upon his GOD.

And the moment they mention the name of Daniel, a frown arises upon the king's brow; and the thought flashes into his mind: Ah! I have made a mistake: I ought never to have signed that

decree. I might have known that Daniel would never call upon me. I know very well whom he serves: he serves the GOD of his fathers. So, instead of blaming Daniel he blames himself: instead of condemning Daniel he condemns himself. And then he casts about in his mind as to how he could manage to preserve him unharmed. All that day, if you could have looked into the palace, you would have seen the king walking up and down the halls and corridors, greatly troubled with the thought that this man must lose his life before the sun sets on that Chaldean plain; for if Daniel were not in the lions den by sundown the law of the Medes and Persians would be broken: and, come what will, that law must be observed and kept.

Darius loved Daniel; and he sought in his heart to deliver him. All day he sought for some plan by which he might save Daniel, and yet preserve the Median law unbroken. But he did not love Daniel as much as your King loved you: he did not love him as much as CHRIST loved us: for if he had he would have proposed to have gone into the lions den in his stead. Let us remember that CHRIST tasted death for us. I can imagine those plotters having a suspicion as to the king's feelings; and saying to him, If you break the law which you yourself have made, respect for the laws of the Medes and Persians will be gone: your subjects will no longer obey you; and your kingdom will depart from you. So Darius is at last compelled to give him up; and he speaks the word for the officers to seize him and take him to the den. And his enemies would take good care that the den is filled with the hungriest beasts in Babylon.

You might have seen those officers going out to bind that old man with the white flowing hair: they march to his dwelling; and they bind his hands together. And those Chaldean soldiers lead captive the man who a few hours before ranked next to the king; the noblest statesman Babylon had ever possessed. They guard him along the way that leads to the lions den. Look at him as he is led along the streets. He treads with a firm and steady step, bearing himself like a conqueror. He trembles not. His knees are firm: they do not smite together. The light of Heaven shines in his calm face. And all Heaven is interested in that aged man. Disgraced down here upon earth, he is the most popular man in Heaven. Angels are delighted in him: how they love him up there! He had stood firm; he had not deviated; he had not turned away from the GOD of the Bible. And he walks with a giants tread to the entrance of the lions den; and they cast him in. They roll a great stone to the mouth of the den; and the king puts his seal upon it. And so the law is kept.

Daniel is cast into the den; but the angel of GOD flies down, and GOD's servant lights unharmed at the bottom. The lions mouths are stopped: they are as harmless as lambs. And if you could have looked into that den, you would have found a man as calm as a summer evening. I do not doubt that at his wonted hour of prayer he knelt down as if he had been in his own chamber. And if he could get the points of the compass in that den, he prayed with his face toward Jerusalem. He loved that city; he loved the temple: and probably with his face toward the city of Jerusalem, he prayed and gave thanks. And later on I can imagine him just laying his head on one of the lions, and going to sleep: and if that were so, no one in Babylon slept more sweetly than Daniel in the den of lions.

But there was one man in Babylon who had no rest that night. If you could have looked into the king's palace, you would have seen one man in great trouble. Darius did not have in his musicians to play to him that night. Away with music and singing! There was no feast that night: he could eat nothing. The servants brought him dainty food; but he had no appetite for it. He felt troubled: he could not sleep. He had put in that den of lions the best man in his kingdom; and he upbraided himself for it. He said to himself, How could I have been a party to such an act as

that?

And early in the morning - probably in the gray dawn, before the sun has risen - the men of Babylon could have heard the wheels of the king's chariot rolling over the pavement; and King Darius might have been seen driving in hot haste to the lions den. I see him alight from his chariot in eager haste, and hear him cry down through the mouth of the den: O Daniel, servant of the living GOD, is thy GOD, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

Hark! a voice gives answer - why, it is like a resurrection voice - and from the depths come up to the king's ear the words of Daniel: 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 innocence was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

The lions could not harm him. The very hairs of his head were numbered. I tell you, that whenever a man stands by GOD, GOD will stand by him. It was well for Daniel that he did not swerve. Oh, how his name shines! What a blessed character he was!

The king gives command that Daniel should be taken up out of the den. And, as he reaches the top, I fancy I see them embracing one another; and that then Daniel mounts the king's chariot, and is driven back with him to the royal palace. There were two happy men in Babylon that morning. Most likely they sat down at meat together, thankful and rejoicing.

No manner of hurt was found upon him. The GOD who had preserved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the fiery furnace, so that no smell of fire had passed on them, had preserved Daniel from the jaws of the lions.

But Daniel's accusers fared very differently. So to speak, they dug a pit for him; and are fallen into it themselves. The king orders that Daniel's accusers shall be delivered to the same ordeal. And they were cast into the den; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

Young men, let us come out from the world; let us trample it under our feet; let us be true to GOD; let us stand in rank, and keep step, and fight boldly for our King! And our crowning time shall come by and by. Yes, the reward will come by and by; and then it may perhaps be said of one, or another, of us: O man, greatly beloved! Young men, your moral character is more than money, mark that! It is worth more than the honor of the world: that is fleeting, and will soon be gone. It is worth more than earthly position: that is transient, and will soon be gone. But to have GOD with you, and to be with GOD - what a grand position! It is an eternal inheritance.

I should like to say a few more words about Daniel. If you will refer to the tenth chapter, you will read that an angel came to him, and told him he was a man greatly beloved. Another angel had on a previous occasion brought him a similar message. Many are of opinion that the one described in the tenth chapter as appearing to Daniel is none other than the one like unto the Son of Man, who visited John when he was banished to the Isle of Patmos. People thought that John was sent off to that island by himself; but no! the angel of GOD was with him. And so it was with Daniel, taken from his own country and his own people. Here in this chapter we read: Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked; and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz..... 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.

It was Daniel's need that brought this angel from the gloryland. And it was the Son of GOD right by his side in that city of Babylon. As I said before, that was the second time the word had come to him that he was greatly beloved. Aye, and even three times did a messenger come from the throne of GOD to tell him this.

I love that precious verse in the eleventh chapter: The people that do know their GOD shall be strong, and do exploits. And also those two verses of the twelfth chapter: Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: some to everlasting life; and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.

This was the consolation the angel bore to Daniel; and great consolation it was. The fact concerning all of us is that we like to shine. There is no doubt about that. Every mother likes her child to shine. If her boy shines at school by getting to the head of his class, the proud mother tells all the neighbors; and she has a right to do so.

But it is not the great of this world who will shine the brightest. For a few years they may shed bright light: but they go out in darkness; they have no inner light. Shining for a time, they go out in the blackness of darkness. Where are the great men who did not know Daniel's GOD? Did they shine long? Why, we know of Nebuchadnezzar and the rest of them scarcely anything, except as they fill in the story about these humble men of GOD. We are not told that statesmen shall shine: they may for a few days or years; but they are soon forgotten. Look at those great ones who passed away in the days of Daniel. How wise in council they were! how mighty and victorious over many nations! what gods upon earth they were! Yet their names are forgotten, and written in the sand. Philosophers, falsely so-called, do they live? Behold men of science - scientific men, they call themselves - going down into the bowels of the earth, hammering away at some rock, and trying to make it talk against the voice of GOD. They shall go down to death by and by; and their names shall rot. But the man of GOD shines. Yes, it is he who shall shine as the stars forever and ever. This Daniel has been gone for 2,500 years; but still increasing millions read of his life and actions. And so it shall be to the end. He will only get better known and better loved; he will only shine the brighter as the world grows older. Of a truth, they that be wise and turn many to righteousness shall shine on, like stars, to eternity.

And this blessed, thrice blessed, happiness, of shining in the glory, is like all the blessings of GOD's kingdom, for every one. Even without the least claim to education or refinement you can shine if you will. A poor working man, or a poor sailor before the mast, can shine forever, if he only works for the Kingdom of GOD. The Bible does not say the great shall shine, but they that turn many to righteousness. A false impression has got hold of many of GOD's people. They have formed the idea that only a few can speak on behalf of GOD. If anything is to be done for the souls of men, nine-tenths of the people say, Oh, the ministers must do it. It does not enter into the thoughts of many people that they have any part in the matter. It is the devils work to keep Christians from the blessed privilege of winning souls to GOD. **ANY ONE CAN DO THIS WORK.**

Do you not see how that little mountain rill keeps swelling till it carries everything before it? Little trickling streams have run into it till now, a mighty river, it has great cities on its banks,

and the commerce of all nations floating on its waters. So when a single soul is won to CHRIST you cannot see the result. A single one multiplies to a thousand; and the thousand into ten thousand. Perhaps a million shall be the fruit. We cannot tell. We only know that the Christian who has turned many to righteousness shall indeed shine forever and ever. Look at those poor, unlettered fishermen, the disciples of JESUS. They were not learned men, but they were great in winning souls. And there is not a child but can work for GOD.

The one thing that keeps people from working for GOD is that they have not the desire to do so. If a man has this desire GOD soon qualifies him. And what we want is GOD's qualification: it must come from Him.

In our large meetings there are frequently three thousand Christians present. Would it be too much to expect if these were living in communion with CHRIST that they should each lead one soul to the Lord within a month? The Son of GOD gave His life for them - shall they refuse to work for Him when He supplies the needed power? What results should we see in souls saved if everyone did his or her work. How many times have I watched at the close of a meeting to see if Christians would speak to the sorrowing ones. If we only had open-eyed watchers for souls, there would be multitudes of inquirers where now there are individual cases. Every church would need an inquiry meeting after every gospel service, and these inquiry rooms would be crowded. These inquiring ones are at every meeting, just anxious to have warm-hearted Christians lead them to CHRIST. They are timid, but will always listen to one speaking to them about CHRIST. Let the prayer of every Christian be, Oh GOD, give me souls for my hire. What would be the result if this were the case with us? Multitudes would be sending up shouts of praise to GOD, and making Heaven glad. Where there is an anxious sinner, there is the place for the Christian.

WHAT ART THOU DOING?

What art thou doing, Christian?
Is it work for CHRIST thy Lord?
Art thou winning many sinners
By thy life, thy pen, thy word?

When the solemn question cometh,
What will thine answer be?
Cant thou point to something finished?
Saying - Lord, my work for Thee!

What doest thou in service?
Art thou taking active part
Are life and tongue in earnest,
Outflow of loving heart?

Or art thou idly gazing
While others toil and sow
Content with simply praising
The earnestness they show?

What doest thou, redeemed one,
Child of a mighty King?
What glory to thy Father
Doth thy princely bearing bring?

If no one brought Him honor,
And no one gave Him praise,
To thee it appertaineth
The pen-note to raise.

What doest thou here?
Wherever Thine earthly lot be cast
Oh, let each hour and moment
In gladsome work be passed!

Here! thou mayest do a lifework;
Here! thou mayest win a crown,
Starlit and gem-surrounded,
To cast before the throne.

Eva Travers Poole.

~ end of chapter 7 ~
