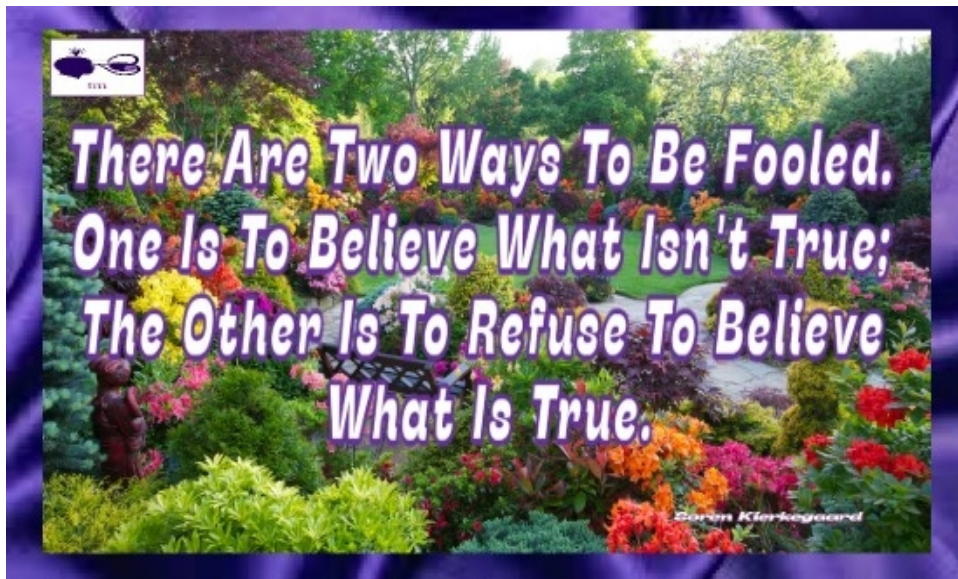




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▼ Additional Reading

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN *

DANIEL 6

The story of Daniel in the lions' den is one of the half dozen best known stories in the Bible. I imagine there are very few people who have not heard it. It is a particular favorite with the children, and children are great judges of literary and dramatic power, as everyone knows who has ever tried to entertain one of them with a story.

Now we learn from the Jesus Christ teaching that there is no such thing as chance. Everything happens in accordance with the law of cause and effect, and, therefore, when a story or a legend is found to have a world-wide circulation, and when that circulation continues generation after generation, we know that it must contain something of great importance to humanity. So it is with the story of Daniel's great demonstration. It contains within it a wonderful lesson in the Truth of Being, and for all these centuries it has helped and comforted millions of people, even though they did not have the scientific key to its meaning.

Let us now consider in a little detail some of the principal points of the story as it is given in the 6th Chapter of Daniel. We are told that Daniel was made what would be called nowadays Chancellor, or chief Secretary of State, under Darius. This was a position of great honor and responsibility, but also one involving great personal danger to the holder.

One could not occupy such an office without making many powerful enemies, and in that ancient Oriental world they were apt to make short work of inconvenient officials in high places, more particularly when the incumbent was a foreigner.

The sword or dagger, poison administered in food, and even through wearing apparel such as gloves or boots, were freely employed in such cases, and, above all, political intrigue was used to bring the obnoxious official to his end.

In the case of Daniel we are told that a carefully engineered plot was carried through, which placed his patron, Darius, in the position of being absolutely helpless to save Daniel. Such plotters would take the character of the monarch into account when laying their plans.

A small-minded, jealous man would be handled in one way, a religious fanatic in another. Darius, who was neither of these things, but an intellectual formalist of a rigid type, was trapped in his own weakness.

Daniel was arrested, taken down to a pit of lions, and thrown in. Such a pit of wild animals was sure to be found near most Eastern palaces of those days, the animals being required partly for display, and partly, as in the present instance, to furnish terrifying examples of political punishment. Daniel, however, instead of being promptly torn to pieces, remained untouched, and in due course was liberated from the lions' den without so much as a scratch.

Spiritually understood this is one of the greatest lessons in the Bible. Daniel is Every man. The story of his great tribulation is the story of any difficulty that can come into your life, or into mine.

Incidentally, it is the story of the whole of your human experience in general, but it applies also to each individual difficulty that you have to overcome. Remember that every individual problem that you have to face is but a tiny model, as it were, of the great problem of overcoming our human belief in limitation, sickness, sin, and death, that is called in theology the Fall of Man.

When some great problem or trouble comes into your life you are, figuratively speaking, thrown into a pit of lions, and many fearful hearts have felt that this is indeed a very graphic description of the state of mind they have experienced.

Now let us look for the key to the story and we shall find it here in verse 10. Daniel had acquired the habit of prayer. Daniel was a man who practiced the Presence of God, not now and again, but constantly and regularly. This verse is very illuminating. We are told that Daniel knew that the warrant for his arrest was signed. (When you are working and praying regularly, along the right lines, you will always get to know anything which it is necessary that you should know; you will not be taken by surprise.)

Daniel knew that trouble was pending, and immediately he started praying, or treating, about it. He did not pronounce an affirmation once or twice and expect it to work, like an incantation. He prayed, clearing up his consciousness, three times a day. "His windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem." Of course the "chamber" is the "secret place" of Jesus, or one's consciousness. Jerusalem is always the highest part of man's nature or personality, short of the actual realization of God; and so Daniel, three times a day, turned in thought to God and raised his thought as high as he possibly could. No one can do more than this.

It is a mistake to think that you must get a wonderfully vivid realization of Spirit in order to overcome any difficulty. Prayer will get you out of your difficulty whether you get any realization or not. You can always open your window toward Jerusalem. Whether you ascend Mount Zion, which is the realization of God Himself, does not lie in your hands—the turning toward Jerusalem does.

In the same verse it says "as he did previously" This tells us that Daniel was in the habit of thus praying scientifically. Some people pray only when they are in trouble, and then, naturally they do not find it easy to get any sort of contact.

One would not expect to practice on the piano only occasionally, and yet play well on any desired occasion. Daniel made a regular practice of prayer and meditation three times a day, and when the dark hour came, this practice stood by him. He knew beforehand that trouble was coming. He probably knew almost exactly what it would be.

And he met it by working steadily on his own consciousness in order to get rid of fear. He probably succeeded in doing this even before his arrest, and was able to rejoice in victory well before the victory itself made its appearance.

Of course, the real causes of all our troubles lie within ourselves. The only enemies we have to overcome in the long run are our own fears, doubts, selfishness, and so forth. These are typified by King Darius and the plotters. All your enemies are within yourself— "a man's enemies shall be those of his own household." Darius represents, in particular, our belief in the power of the external world to limit or injure us. He represents none of the things that are usually called evil, but rather our limiting belief in the fixed and unchangeable character of outer things that are in themselves good.

The truth is that no outer conditions have any power in themselves, no outer laws need bind us, when we appeal to the supreme Christ Law of Divine freedom and harmony; but we do not know, or we forget this great truth, and so we go on believing in and submitting to all kinds of supposed laws of limitation. We believe that we are too old to do something that we could very well do. We believe that a certain climate can adversely affect our bodies, when in truth it has no such power.

The plotters represent essentially evil things, such as the above mentioned sins, and of course Everyman has to reckon with these too. "The law of the Medes and Persians, which alter not," is a splendid expression of our usual notion of these outer limitations as being impossible to overcome, of there being things and conditions that we just have to "put up with."

There is a well known picture of Daniel in the Lions' Den, which was certainly painted by an inspired artist. Daniel is shown not looking at the lions, but turning his back on them! What a lesson in Scientific Prayer or Treatment; what I have elsewhere called "the Golden Key."

The more we think over any difficulty the more we amplify it, and staring at our lions causes them to grow and grow until they are as big as elephants. Daniel is shown looking upward toward the light—a graphic representation of the Practice of the Presence—and the lions, instead of looking ferocious or angry, seem good humored enough as they stroll about or stand watching him curiously.

Those who have had much to do with wild animals in their native jungle always insist that no wild animal will attack a man who is not afraid of it. In India many stories are told of true Yogis (that is those who follow the Rajah or royal Yoga which is the search for reunion with God, and not just the acquiring of the power to play tricks on the etheric plane) living among tigers and other beasts of prey in perfect safety, and the Bible itself tells us that a time will come when the lion shall lie down with the lamb, because man has gotten fear, and hatred, and jealousy, and condemnation out of his own heart, and has thereby changed the whole moral and spiritual climate of this planet.

When you are in trouble you are Daniel in the Lions' Den. The lions will seem terribly ferocious; but pray until fear has begun to go; keep knowing the Truth, in the face of all appearances; and you will come out of the lions' den safe and sound, without a single scratch, as Daniel did.

You will come out stronger and better for the ordeal, because no problem that we meet in the light of Truth ever leaves us where it found us. Every problem thus overcome is a definite step upward in the growth of the soul.

It is significant, is it not, that being unable to accuse Daniel of any of the ordinary transgressions, his enemies proved beyond a shadow of doubt that Daniel was a man who declined to worship, to believe in or trust, any power but GOD. In the sight of the world this was a guilty offense, but in the light of Truth it was shown to be Daniel's salvation.

The longer one continues in the Truth teaching the more convinced one becomes of the fact that this is a mental world, and that man's dominion lies within his own mentality. When once we have grasped this fact clearly and have determined to put it into operation in our lives, it seems as though our difficulties were over, and theoretically this could be the case.

Practically, however, it calls for the most rigid and persistent watchfulness on our part, if we are not to be constantly straying from the true path of correct thought. "Watch and pray," said Jesus, knowing how subtle are the temptations to step aside into old errors. "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance," said an ancient sage, and never was this truer than in the life of the soul.

If you really want to demonstrate health, happiness, and true prosperity—and every student of Truth knows that it is their duty to demonstrate these things as soon as they possibly can—you must set aside a definite time every day for prayer and meditation, and for checking up upon your own daily conduct and demonstration, or want of demonstration.

You must conduct the affairs of your soul in a businesslike way. Too many religious people fail to realize that the business of spiritual growth calls for order, method, and intelligent organization, just as much as does any commercial business or engineering enterprise, or any other important activity, if it is to be a success.

So great is the power of prayer that not only will it get you out of any difficulty, but the things in yourself which produced that difficulty will be utterly destroyed forever, with all their associated thoughts and fears; and all consequences or collateral effects that might arise from the problem itself will be taken care of too" and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den."

There is no end to a prayer. It echoes on forever in your soul. Long after the visible demonstration has been made and forgotten, the prayer that produced it continues to work for your spiritual advancement, for the creative power of a God thought is Unlimited and eternal.

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"Three things cannot long be hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth."

~ Confucius