

Paul H. Dixon: Last week we started discussing Daniel's excellent spirit. We noted that in this excellent spirit, he was teachable. Obviously, he had been taught by his parents. He received their instruction well as the book of Proverbs would admonish us to do. He had received, at least by way of a role model, instruction from the leadership of his king, Josiah, a godly man, the prophet Jeremiah, no doubt his instructors, his teachers, his friends, the circumstances of life, even being taken captivity into Babylon.

And I am convinced that even those kings and leaders who knew not his God, he learned from them because he had a teachable spirit. Today I would like for us to note together that Daniel had a dependable spirit. And as we think of Daniel and his dependable spirit, there are several things I would like for you to note. Obviously, an unusual man. And I want you to underline some things, first of all, in chapter nine verse 23. In the ninth chapter, Gabriel comes to Daniel with a vision. And in verse 23... I'll start with verse 22. He informed me and talked with me and said, "Oh, Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth and I am come to thee," and I want you to underline this, "For thou art greatly beloved."

You are beloved, Daniel, greatly. Then perhaps you'd just like to jot in the reference, in the margin there of verse 23, chapter 10, verse 11. Because we find this again, the same statement regarding Daniel. Again, a special message from heaven. And in verse 10, behold a hand touched me would set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, "Oh Daniel, a man greatly beloved." Go over to verse 19. This same individual, this messenger from heaven is speaking.

And in verse 18, then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me and said, "Oh, man, greatly beloved, fear not. Peace be unto thee. Be strong. Yay. Be strong. The only other person in the Bible who has someone from heaven describe them as greatly beloved is the son of God himself. This is an unusual honor bestowed upon this man, Daniel. I would like to suggest that he was beloved of God and also of man. In fact, his enemies had great testimony of him in chapter six, verse four.

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion nor fault. For as much as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Now, that was the testimony of his enemies. It's an unusual man who can have those who oppose him, who seek his ruin, to stand up and say, "I find no fault in him. He is faithful." Turn, if you will, to the book of Daniel chapter six, verse 22. He gives testimony himself when he says, "My God hath sent his angels and have shut the lion's mouths, that they have not hurt me. For as much as before him," that is before God, "Innocency was found in me and also before thee, O King, have I done no hurt." And then if you would like to see God's testimony, keep a finger in Daniel and turn to the book of Ezekiel chapter 14, the 14th verse.

Maybe to pick up the context, let's pick it up at the 12th verse. The word of the Lord came again to me saying, "Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it. Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job are in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. And look again at the same chapter in the 20th verse, picking it up in verse 19. Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast. Though, Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter. They shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

An almighty God speaks to Ezekiel and puts his special hand of blessing upon these three men as being men of righteousness, are being faithful in their lives before him. Yes, Noah and Job, but right in the middle is our man, Daniel. What an impact this man had and what a testimony for God. And I think you would have to recognize anyone so described as beloved, greatly beloved, and anyone who is found to be so faultless and so faithful, is a man for us to emulate. Notice, if you will, in chapter six, verses four and five again, that when the president sought to find occasion, they couldn't find any, that he was found faithful, then said these men, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

Here was a man who was faithful to those he served, even though they be unregenerate. He was faithful to his friends who did know the Lord. He was faithful to his God. In every area of his life, he was dependable. Someone has said, "God has no larger field for the man who is not faithful doing the work where he is." And you see young people, right now as we talk about an excellent spirit, you are developing life habits that will go with you through the rest of your life. And one of the things that we have to get ingrained into us is how to start a job that is worth doing and doing it well, and until we complete that job.

Being dependable, whether it's an assignment in a class, or it's a responsibility that is requested by a friend, or whether it is something in Christian service, or in your local church, or in responsibility to your parents, but just staying at it and clicking away and going down the path, doing that now and doing it for the rest of your life. It's true that Daniel was a faultless man. The purity of his life is obvious, but somehow I feel the faithfulness in his life is even a greater challenge. Amy Carmichael once wrote, "What happy things beginnings are, but it is the steady going on that counts."

The going on when the excitement has subsided, and there is no evident mounting up with wings as eagles. The call then is to sheer faithfulness. That is the time to count on the sustaining grace of God who enables his followers to walk and not think. And again, remember that Daniel's faithfulness was in the midst of being in captivity, in a time when obviously most of his friends had

ceased to be faithful to their God, had allowed that community to mold their thinking and their behavioral patterns, but not Daniel.

And we're going to spend our closing session on Daniel, yes, talking about the kinds of stands that he took, and the spirit that he had when he took them. But yet as I look at Daniel, I see him going beyond that. And in the midst of it all, having a testimony clear and ringingly true for Jesus Christ. Now, this is true of Joseph, and of Ruth, and of Esther, David, John, Paul. And I would like to think of you and me. Some of you are doing quite well now, but you haven't had any serious setbacks. You may have that serious illness. You may lose that one that you think you're going to marry, and all of a sudden that relationship may just go to pieces.

You may have something happen back home that is just earth shaking. There will be all kinds of pressures upon you to throw in the towel on God, on your education, on just staying at the job and being faithful in every area of your life. And I would like to think when those pressures come, that the man Daniel will stand out in your mind as someone who was dependable, as well as teachable. I think there has to be a key to someone like this though.

If you could pick out one thing that God used to make him so dependable, what would that be? Well, I happen to think it's his prayer life. Did you ever notice as you look at Daniel's faithfulness as you go through the book, that in the first nine chapters of the book, four times it is recorded that he prayed. For your notes, two of those prayers are prayers of petition. Chapter two, verses 17 through 19 and chapter six, verses 10 and 11. One was a prayer of thanksgiving. Chapter two, verses 20 through 23, and one was a prayer of confession and intercession, chapter nine, verses three through 19. But I would also like to suggest, as we study Daniel's prayer life, this is covering five kings. He has served under five leaders. He has been faithful under all of them, and he's kept praying during all of that time. We open up the book and he, no doubt as a teenager, by the time you read chapter six, he's probably been in captivity for 65 years, an 80-year-old man, and he's still faithful, and he's still praying.

Yesterday, Don Allen, one of our graduates who uses a plane, we're in a club, and he flies me to meetings to save me some time. And trying to stay in here all day Saturday and Saturday night, we flew out early yesterday morning to go to Fort Wayne so I could speak at Blackhawk Baptist. Several of you from there, pray for them in their search for a pastor. But we were with a man yesterday, I don't know how old he is. We went over to Ken Nichols' home for the noon meal and with his family. And there was a man that many of you will recall, OB Scott, who was here for a short time.

And OB is at least in his sixties, maybe a few more years. And when it was all over and we got back in the plane to fly back last night to get back in time for church, Don Allen said to me, he said, "I just love to talk to old people." He said, "I learn so much from them." That told me a lot about Don Allen, but also said

something to me about OB Scott, who still has something to give us as a believer, and he's been down the road away.

And I would like to think that all of us, when we are in our sixties, and in our seventies, and in our eighties, should Jesus [inaudible] is coming, and for many of you, that's a lot of years yet to go. You'll still be faithful. But you know how you'll be faithful? By having the kind of a prayer life Daniel had. Without studying his prayers, if one thing stands out, as you get into chapter six, it talks about how Daniel prayed three times a day. A busy man, a leader, and yet, evidently, he would get up in the morning and he would start his day in prayer. And yes, he would go home at night and he would end his day in prayer, but somehow even in the middle of the day, he would find a block of time to get alone with his God and spend some time with him.

And I know what the Bible teaches in the New Testament about praying without ceasing, but I also think that it is very important to discipline ourselves, to be faithful, to have our times when we do go to God with thanksgiving, and in worship, and in intercession, and in petition. I'd like to give you a guarantee. I'd like to give it to me and I'd like to give it to you. If we'll be faithful in our prayer lives, we'll finish the course. If we'll be faithful in our prayer lives, we can be faithful like Daniel. Alexander McLaren wrote, "Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus."

These simple words, quoting from scripture, contain volumes. During all the troubles of the nation, from the king's insanity and the murder of his successors, amidst whirling intrigues, envies, plots, and persecutions, this one man stood firm like a pillar amidst blowing sands. So God keeps the steadfast soul, which is fixed on him, and which the... While the world passeth away and the fashions thereof, he that doeth the will of God, abideth forever. May we not only have a teachable spirit, but a dependable spirit if we would have an excellent spirit like Daniel. Our father, dismiss us today with this simple truth to take back into our dormitories and our homes, go with us into the classrooms and through life. Oh God, make us to be like Daniel, for Jesus' sake, amen.