

The writing on the wall: Daniel ch.5



Today's TFTD comes from Anna

I am not going to make a comparison between King Belshazzar and President Trump however easy they are to make. I am not going to presume to know what is going in anyone's heart or to understand their relationship with God. However, Trump and his narrow defeat in the US elections do work as a modern analogy for understanding Daniel's position and his life of faithfulness.

Daniel was called to the King, the most powerful man in the world, surrounded by all the trappings of wealth and power and told him that God was actually in charge, the king would lose his kingdom and that it was his fault for not humbling himself. He had to give the king a message of judgement and failure.

We don't know if God gave Daniel any special revelation to interpret the writing on the wall for the king, he did give him the ability to interpret King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, but in this story, it doesn't say. It is possible that Daniel just knew God and the history of God's people well enough to know that the King's pride, his worship of idols and his disregard for God had caused his own downfall. That God had given him a chance at power but he had abused it.

Daniel says to the King, you had the example of your father and you didn't listen you still "exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven" (v.22). You used artefacts that should be used to worship God for your own ends and you have praised gods of silver and gold who are ultimately worthless and you have ignored the God "to whom you belong" and have not honoured him.- a harsh message indeed!

Daniel had to do something that could be likened to telling Trump that he would lose the election, all his power and all his influence. The long-drawn-out process of Trump conceding the election shows us how much people in power don't want to be told they are not God.

I wouldn't want to do that! How could Daniel be so brave? How could he stand up to all that earthly power? Daniel could see beyond the material because he had spent his life, the ups and downs, relying on God.

At this point, when Daniel is called to interpret the writing on the wall for King Belshazzar, it is estimated that he is over 80 years old. He has been in exile for over 60 years. Daniel was taken at a young age from Jerusalem to Babylon, but the stories of him at the beginning of the book of Daniel show him not despairing, not giving up, but continuing in faithfulness to the

disciplines he learnt in Jerusalem and to regular prayer. He and his friends didn't have it easy but through all the challenges they faced they continued in dedication and commitment to their God.

Living in a country that did not know God and lived by different ideals meant that Daniel had to make lots of choices day by day as to what was right or wrong for him, as well as some other major choices (remember the lions!). He couldn't rely on others, he had to rely on God. His confidence in God was born out of a place of needing to have that confidence because his faith had been tested so often.

In some respects, we are lucky that we don't need to have a faith like that. We have the church and each other to support us in our faith, we can gather (mostly) and help each other out when we need each other. We can tell our stories of faith and we are not challenged on them that often. However, that ease does leave us out of practice.

So, knowing that we probably won't be called to personally tell Trump he has lost the election or anything like that, what can we learn from Daniel? He is an example of the importance of the small regular disciplines that keep us close to God daily. The habits that help us stay close to God. For him, it was not eating the kings' food and praying in an upstairs room, for each of us it may be different: praying in different ways, reading or Bible study groups, listening to music or silence, walking or stillness. Whatever it is that helps us to, like Daniel, be able to see what God would say in our situations big and small.

And from the example of Daniel, we also learn that his confidence was not misplaced. That our God is the God who is in control. He saved him from the lions and his friends from the flames, and though we don't always

understand it, he is the power behind all earthly kingdoms making them rise and fall. We can have confidence in the God Daniel served who is also the God who sent his son to die on a cross so we could all be forgiven and saved; and the God who works today in us, through his Holy Spirit.

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