

## Daniel in the Lions' Den! Daniel ch.6

Today's TFTD is from Rod Hill:

One of the more vivid memories from my childhood is of two wooden jigsaws of biblical stories. I don't remember now what one of them was, but the other was 'Daniel in the Lion's Den'. I can see the front of the box quite vividly. It looked something like this:

But how Daniel came to be in the lion's den I never knew, nor even asked. He was just, there. Behind that image lies a significant story, told in Daniel 6.

What do you do when the government of the day tells you that you can't go to Church?

In 1981 I was living in Africa and a military coup was declared, this included a total curfew during the hours of darkness. But we had community prayers and community Bible study each week, after darkness. Should we stop gathering to prayer together? Doesn't the country need prayer even more now? With a military camp close by we knew that to gather together for prayer was likely to be a risky activity, but we decided to do so anyway, despite the possibility of being shot at. That was, we believed, right then, but what of now?

'Should those who believe in God always do what the government says?' This is a question that comes up in several places in the Bible, notably in Romans 13, 'Everyone must submit himself to the governing

authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established’.

But, what if the governing authorities are wrong? As we remembered last week, Guy Fawkes’ answer was to blow up Parliament! A bit dramatic, one might think, and likely to get one arrested under anti-terror legislation.

What if corrupt officials and advisers, with their own agenda, were to push the government to pass a law that was, in your view, wrong? We don’t have that kind of corruption in Britain in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century do we?

“<sup>10</sup> Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.” (Daniel 6. 10 NIV)

It was as a direct result of this choice to obey what he saw as God’s law, rather than the law of the Medes and Persians, that Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den!

‘Do we obey the law of the land in relation to the lockdown?’ is a ‘live’ question for some of us at the moment. As I write a letter has been sent from the leaders of some of the faith communities in England, urging the government to reconsider banning public worship during the lockdown, but encouraging us to engage in private prayer in our Churches.

You may have seen this image on Facebook, and I want to say that it's absolutely true. Church is not cancelled because of the Covid 19 pandemic. Indeed, church and prayer, are needed more than ever now.

Let's throw open our windows, metaphorically, so that the people of England will see the church at prayer. After all, isn't prayer one of those crucial things that marks the church out as being different from the many other very good community organisations in Alderly Edge? We won't get thrown into the Lions' Den, but we may just invite others to glimpse the grace of God through our prayer. Could our equivalent be to respond positively to the archbishops' encouragement to us to light a candle of hope in our windows each day? We've been doing it since March, except the odd days when we forget!

Of course, just as my experience in Africa, so with Daniel, God brings him through the storm. For many of us the lockdown through November will cause great anxiety (and I don't in any way want to minimise that, or the serious risk to mental health that the lockdown is likely to induce), but let's trust in God for a better future. We don't want to go back to the same way of doing things, do we? Especially not when God has given us a glimpse of a better future, with a less polluted and more equal world.

Just look at how the story ends in Daniel 6:

"Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth:

"May you prosper greatly!

<sup>26</sup> "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.

“For he is the living God  
and he endures forever;  
his kingdom will not be destroyed,  
his dominion will never end.  
<sup>27</sup> He rescues, and he saves;  
he performs signs and wonders  
in the heavens and on the earth.

He has rescued Daniel  
from the power of the lions.”

<sup>28</sup> So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of  
Cyrus<sup>[b]</sup> the Persian.”

May we prosper, together with all God’s people, at the end of this trial that  
we find ourselves in today.

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