

The Message of Daniel for the Christian Teacher

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[This essay was delivered at the Fox River Valley Pastor-Teacher Conference on April 17, 1972, at Appleton, Wisconsin.]

At the very outset, your essayist wishes to state that he has, in this paper, to a great extent followed the exegesis of Dr. H.C. Leupold in his excellent *Exposition of Daniel*.¹ Dr. Leupold is undoubtedly one of America's ablest contemporary Old Testament scholars. Not the least of his accomplishments is his ability to refute the lies of higher Bible criticism.

Bible critics truly run wild when they discuss the book of Daniel. When one reads their evil machinations, one wonders if there is any part of this inspired book that has not been attacked. Dr. Leupold cites judgments like the following: "The first historical reference is incorrect"; "This unhistorical tale seems to be a confused reminiscence"; and Daniel contains "the most remarkable historical blunders." Writers who label themselves Christian call some of Daniel's accounts, especially chapters three and six, the story of the three men in the fiery furnace and of Daniel in the lion's den, pious fiction at best. Many critics date the composition of the book at about 165 B.C., some 300 years after Daniel lived, while some claim that the real author forged Daniel's name to gain readership and canonicity for his work.

That is a typically defiant way in which pseudo-scholars set themselves up as judges of the Word, instead of letting the Word judge them and us. That is what people within and outside of the visible church have done to this holy, precious, and eternally true prophetic writing, but God laughs at them too, even as He has all of His enemies in derision (Ps 2:4).

In view of this vicious criticism, let us confess here and now that we unhesitatingly accept the entire book of Daniel as God's own truth. Without question its study is valuable for us personally and for our work as God's called ministers. (The term "Christian Teacher" in the title of this paper will be used in the broad sense of the word to denote all called ministers of Christ, for all of us are Christian teachers to a greater or lesser extent.)

Another point: When he accepted the assignment, the writer of this paper had no idea how much Daniel has to say to the 20th century Christian teacher. Consequently, time limits have compelled us to restrict the remarks to the lessons within the first six chapters of Daniel. This is the historical section of the book. Although both Drs. Keil and Leupold justifiably include the important chapter 7 in part I, we shall for the most part discuss only chapters 1-6.

Finally, since four of the first six chapters treat Daniel's and his three friends' relationship with King Nebuchadnezzar (Nebuchadrezzar in Babylonian), the first part of this paper will present a cursory account of that time and its lessons for us. The second part will then be devoted to a discussion of Daniel's God-given attributes, how he developed and used them, and the application to our times and calling.

I

Almost all of the events written in the Book of Daniel occurred during Israel's Babylonian Captivity, which we generally say began in 586 B.C. Actually, King Nebuchadnezzar may have conducted as many as five different campaigns against Judah, beginning in 605. In each case some Jews were taken captive to Babylon, until the captivity was complete in 586 B.C.

The Captivity—what a tragedy for God's people! After 800 long years of sin and grace, idolatry and repentance, chastisement and glory, stern warnings and precious promises, the Jewish nation ceased to exist. Its cities were destroyed, its capital leveled, its Temple demolished, its king blinded and chained, its citizens deported to a heathen land, its prospects, humanly speaking, hopeless. The disaster was complete, yet God had

¹ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1949).

expressly predicted such a tragedy through Moses: If you continue in wickedness, God had warned, “The Lord shall bring thee...unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known” (Deut. 28:36).

By contrast, Babylon was wealthy, thriving, glittering, dominant, renowned, and glorious almost beyond belief. When Daniel, aged probably 15, and his three friends were brought to Babylon in 604 B.C., and especially when they observed how Nebuchadnezzar, that master builder, gradually beautified and transformed the capital city, they must have been dumbfounded by all the splendor.

We have accounts by two men who saw Babylon in the fifth century B.C. One of them was Herodotus, the “Father of History,” a contemporary of Daniel’s later years. Another was Ctesias, the Greek historian, who lived a few years later. They agreed that Babylon was magnificent beyond belief. Listen to what they wrote (they do not agree in details): Babylon’s stupendous outer wall was 87 feet thick and 335 feet high; it extended for 56 miles and enclosed an area of 200 square miles; it was protected by a vast outside moat. A second wall was built inside the first one. There were additional fortresses in every district of the city and there was protection across the Euphrates, since Babylon was built on both sides of this great river. Anyone who looked at fortifications like that would likely maintain that no enemy would ever penetrate these walls nor starve its people. The glory of Babylon must be imperishable!

Then picture for yourselves Nebuchadnezzar’s magnificent palace, again surrounded by a high wall seven miles in circumference. Imagine the straight streets, the dozens of resplendent buildings and temples, climaxed by the greatest building of them all, the Temple of Bel, with its 40 foot gold image. Is it any wonder that one author wrote, “Probably no individual ruler ever left behind him the amount of building done by Nebuchadnezzar”?

Try also to visualize those Hanging Gardens, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, built, so it was said, by Nebuchadnezzar to please his Queen Amytis, who longed for the mountains of her native land while living in fiat Babylon. Those gardens were an artificial, terraced mountain, supposedly as much as 400 feet high, with trees and many kinds of beautiful plant life, all watered from the Euphrates by machine. Can you imagine how proud Nebuchadnezzar must have felt when he surveyed his city from the top of the Hanging Gardens?

Yes, Daniel saw luxury, wealth, power (Babylon was the greatest empire the world had ever seen), moral corruption (Ishtar, served by temple prostitutes, was one of the goddesses), self-indulgence, and above all buildings in almost inconceivable abundance. We stagger to think of the work that was involved just in making the countless bricks, for Babylon had no stone, to say nothing about the wisdom of the architects and the energy of the workmen who created it all. No wonder the magnificence of Babylon was a byword among the ancients. It was all exactly in keeping with God’s will, as He had specifically stated through Jeremiah: “Now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant...all nations shall serve him” (27:6,7).

The parallels between Babylon and our beloved country are obvious, for what nation can rival America in wealth, splendor, luxury, and power? No country in all the world ever approached our \$10 daily income for every man, woman, and child; indeed, many a country hardly reaches 5% of that figure. We have sufficient power in our atomic arsenals to annihilate every major city on earth and many a minor one as well. With 6% of the world’s population we use 30% of its energy. We annually consume 37 billion board feet of lumber, 3 ½ billion barrels of crude oil, 21 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, 90 million tons of iron ore, and 4.6 million tons of aluminum. Less than 5% of our people annually produce 1.4 billion bushels of wheat, 4.1 billion bushels of corn, 1.1 billion bushels of soybeans, 3.8 million tons of rice, and other crops in proportion. No other country anywhere or at any time, not even fabled Rome, comes close to our 3 ¾ million miles of roads, many of them four, six, or more lanes wide. Everyone of these figures is totally inconceivable (no person could ever live long enough to count to a billion). If King Nebuchadnezzar exulted over Babylon in his day, what in the world would he say if he saw America?

Yet, we who are Christian teachers must view all of this from the right perspective for our own spiritual welfare and for that of the souls whom God entrusted into our care. Our God tells us in many places exactly what our attitude must be toward the world’s pomp and glory, as we shall see in the following paragraphs.

For example, even as we view the splendor of Babylon, we must recall that all of this was temporal and transient. Isaiah, the great prophet with whose writings Daniel was undoubtedly well acquainted, wrote: “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged” (Isa. 13:19–22).

This is exactly what happened. “Babylon has become a quarry from which all the tribes in the vicinity have perpetually derived the bricks with which they built their cities... ‘the great city,’ ‘the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency,’ has thus emphatically ‘become heaps,’ Jer. 51:37—she is truly ‘an astonishment, and a hissing, without an inhabitant.’”² Even those mammoth walls, designed to protect the fabled city from all her present and future enemies, have been “thrown down” and “utterly broken” (Jer. 50:15; 51:58). Yes, God is able to carry out His threats and His promises, no matter what measures man devises against the divine will. Should anyone actually be so insane as to defy the living God, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision” (Ps. 2:4).

The destruction of Babylon and much more was revealed by God to Nebuchadnezzar in that astonishing dream, recorded in chapter two. Normally, of course, dreams have no significance whatsoever, as Ecclesiastes 5:7 and Isaiah 29:7,8 indicate; yet, on rare occasions God did communicate with select individuals through dreams. At the same time he convinced the persons involved that the dream bore a divine message.

This was the case with Nebuchadnezzar. He knew that someone was telling him something important through his dream, for Scripture tells us that he was so greatly agitated that he could not go back to sleep. As soon as possible, he called all of his wise men and commanded them to tell him both the dream and its interpretation; if they succeeded, they would be greatly rewarded; if they failed, they would be executed. This totally unreasonable request possibly resulted from Nebuchadnezzar’s great agitation, and it did show that monarch’s absolute power of life and death over his subjects. The reason for the impossible request was not that Nebuchadnezzar forgot the dream, as we might gather from the King James translation of 2:5: “The thing has gone from me.” That should undoubtedly be translated, “The word from me is sure,” (RSV); or, “The matter has been fully determined by me,” (Leupold).

When Nebuchadnezzar’s wise men confessed their complete inability to tell and to interpret the dream, he summarily ordered their execution, including that of Daniel and his companions. When Daniel heard this decree, he asked Arioch, the head executioner, to obtain an audience for him with King Nebuchadnezzar. When that was granted, Daniel asked for a stay of execution, and that, too, was granted. Immediately Daniel hurried to consult with his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. All of them prayed earnestly that God would reveal the secret to Daniel, a request that was granted, for God did reveal the dream and its interpretation. In this, as well as in almost every other phase of Daniel’s life, we can see his complete reliance on God, who repeatedly, sometimes miraculously, helped him. Daniel was grateful (2:19–23).

When Daniel then again stood before King Nebuchadnezzar, he first humbly gave all credit to God (2:28–30), stating, “There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the King Nebuchadnezzar what should be in the latter days” (2:28).

Therefore Daniel repeated the dream: You saw a great splendid, yet terrifying image with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, abdomen and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of clay. Then a stone, detached from a mountain, rolled across the landscape, struck the image in its feet, breaking them, and so thoroughly demolishing the entire image that it was reduced to something like chaff and blown away by the wind. Then the stone itself grew to such high proportions that it “became a mountain, and filled the whole earth” (2:35).

² M’Clintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, Harper, 1882), I, 606.

The interpretation followed immediately: “Thou, O King, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory...thou art the head of gold” (2:37,38). Babylon was indeed a world kingdom; its dominion spread over all of western Asia; and its power was personified in Nebuchadnezzar. The silver kingdom is “inferior to thee” (2:39), because the Medo-Persian Empire, represented by the two sides of the breast and the two arms, with its upcoming 200 years of history and its lack of inward unity, could not be compared with the 2000 glorious years of Babylonian history. The third kingdom, prefigured by the bronze abdomen and thighs, represents the short-lived, but highly influential Macedonian kingdom of Alexander the Great. “The fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron...it (shall) break in pieces and bruise” (2:40), exactly what Rome did with its incomparable legions. “And as for the toes of the feet being part iron and part clay, to an extent the kingdom shall be strong but a part of it shall be fragile” (2:42, Leupold). That, again, is exactly what happened when the Germanic tribes began to infiltrate Rome and to marry its daughters. Then the Roman empire was weakened, “just as iron and clay will not mix” (2:43).

Each of these metals fittingly characterized the four kingdoms, for Babylon used gold profusely for its shrines and images; silver marked the commercial spirit of Persia; the Greeks developed bronze weapons more than any other nation; and Rome’s invincible armaments were iron.

No other nation besides these four was characterized by the dream, because no other nation attained world-wide dominion until long after the beginning of the Christian era.³ Above all, these four nations were extremely important for the kingdom of God, while others were comparatively unimportant, a hint to Christian teachers regarding the proper emphasis in their teaching.

Our God specifically used these four kingdoms for His own purpose: Babylon, to carry out His threat of deportation; Persia, to restore the remnant; Greece, to provide the common language; and Rome with its incomparable *Pax Romana*, to facilitate the spread of the Gospel.

However, there is another part to the dream, the most important part by far—the rolling stone that broke the image and grew to such gigantic proportions that it became a huge mountain, “and filled the whole earth” (2:35). That stone represents the Kingdom of God, the holy Christian Church. This kingdom set up by “the God of heaven...shall never be destroyed...it shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (2:44). It is a kingdom that does not merely exist side by side with earthly kingdoms, but it actually will destroy all earthly kingdoms, in part by overthrowing their evils and then particularly by destroying them completely on Judgment Day.

This was the extraordinary dream and its auspicious prophecy of the rise and fall of world-wide kingdoms. And don’t forget, O King Nebuchadnezzar, and everyone else who hears and reads this account, “The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof is sure” (2:45).

“Then the king, Nebuchadnezzar, fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel” (2:46). Thereby he undoubtedly meant to worship the God of Daniel, for he said, “Your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of lords, and a revealer of secrets” (2:47), without, however, meaning thereby to confess that our God is the only true and living God.

All of us must note the implications of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream: Swiftly or slowly all world kingdoms arise, shine, decay, and die. That was splendid Babylon’s fate: Today its power and glory are but a memory in the books of history. That is exactly what God had prophesied sixty years before the event: “As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah...behold, a people shall come from the north...and will not show mercy...against thee, O daughter of Babylon” (Jer. 50:40–42). “Therefore the wild beasts of the desert...shall dwell there...and it shall be no more inhabited forever”; “the broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken” (Jer. 50:39; 51:58). That is precisely what happened—Babylon disappeared.

But how, you will ask, did King Cyrus, the Persian, ever breach Babylon’s mighty walls in 538 B.C.? That was simple—he diverted the Euphrates River, and his armies marched into the city on dry land! For all practical purposes that ended Babylon.

³ It is amazing how often Scripture refers to Babylon by name (almost 300 times) besides the many verses that do not specifically name this empire.

And did not Alexander of Macedon conquer Persia almost as quickly? And did not Alexander's world empire practically disappear after his death? Only Rome lasted for many years, again because God had specific functions in mind for it; but it, too, disintegrated and disappeared.

You can be certain that America with all of its glory will also disappear, if the world stands that long. In fact, when we consider America's dedication to materialism, luxury, immorality, immense wages for little work, crime in the streets, and a thousand other acts of defiance against the Almighty and His Commandments, we certainly should be able to smell Sodom and Gomorrah's fire and brimstone not far distant.

Since all of the pomp and glory of nations are destined to disappear, we must give specific heed in our teaching to Bible passages like the following: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world...the world passeth away" (I John 2:15,17); "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2); "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life" (II Tim. 2:4). We dare not become so enamored with the things of this world that we forget their transitoriness.

Our thoughts and hearts, by contrast, must be centered upon the last part of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, upon the stone that destroyed the image, upon the Kingdom of God, the Holy Christian Church. Daniel's God and ours has said that it "shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44), and our Lord renewed that promise with His famous, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). In God's kingdom we shall be safe and secure for time and for eternity. Indeed, our God regulates all history, the rise and fall of every nation on earth, for the welfare of His kingdom, even as He stated the purpose of all history in Ephesians 1:10: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather in one all things in Christ."

That is the kingdom we have been called to serve; that is our privilege and our obligation; working for it is the one work in all the world that will last into all eternity. It is our pride and joy, a blessing far above anything that we have deserved; and we must make the most of it.

II

In the second part of this essay we shall concentrate upon Daniel's person, pointing out the lessons for us. We shall examine particularly those characteristics of this eminent, God-fearing statesman that are valuable for our teaching ministry in this latter half of the 20th century. And, for the most part, we shall consider those characteristics in the chronological order in which they are mentioned in Daniel, chapters 1–6.

God's Word bids us to look first at *Daniel's training* for his life's work. As a future statesman in Babylon's illustrious kingdom, his education had to be an excellent one, according to the standards of that day (1:3–21). The training began in this way: Possibly as Nebuchadnezzar was about to return from his early campaign against Judah, he commanded his chief eunuch, Ashpenaz, to select a few elite Jews, teen-agers undoubtedly, for eventual, highly prized work within the royal court itself. They were to be noble, handsome, and especially endowed with "all forms of wisdom...a wide range of knowledge and unusual understanding" (1:4, Leupold).

For three years they were to be rigorously trained in all "the learning and the tongues of the Chaldees" (1:4). The term "Chaldee" designates a special class of learned men. Exactly what that education consisted of is answered by Leupold, quoting Pinches: It included "the old languages of Babylonia...some knowledge of astronomy and astrology; mathematics...a certain amount of natural history...a store of mythological learning...legends of Creation, the Flood...agriculture," and, undoubtedly, architecture.

What an honor for Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, to be chosen for such a coveted education and such an exalted position at the court of the world's ruler! It undoubtedly meant some of the nation's best teachers, completely subsidized education, respect and honor from the Babylonians, and also a name change for Daniel to Belteshazzar, and for his three friends to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the Babylonian names by which Daniel's friends are commonly known to us.

Daniel's model education, however, also included a severe conflict with his faith: He was asked to share food and drink from the king's table. Normally, of course, that would be considered an additional choice honor,

but Daniel could not accept it. Parts of the food eaten there were sacrificed to idols and to partake of it would be a worship of idols or, as St. Paul characterized it in I Corinthians 10:20, a “fellowship with devils.” Additionally, parts of this food were undoubtedly strictly forbidden by the Levitical laws (Lev. 11).

Daniel seemed to understand the conflict immediately, and without hesitation he solemnly resolved “not (to) defile himself with...the king’s meat” (1:8). Humbly and quietly, not at all stubbornly or tactlessly, he “requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (1:8).

Ashpenaz was sympathetic to Daniel’s request. He might have considered it ungrateful, presumptuous, or even rebellious, for who ever heard of someone refusing an invitation to eat the king’s food? Yet, “God granted Daniel favor and sympathy in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs” (1:9, Leupold). Nevertheless, he immediately explained to Daniel why he could not excuse him from the king’s food. Had he done so, and had Daniel and his friends shown any signs of paleness or malnutrition, while the other youths were healthy looking, he would surely have been executed for disobeying Nebuchadnezzar’s order.

Yet, Daniel persisted. He approached his immediate superior, whom Ashpenaz had set over the four, with this reasonable request: “Put thy servants to the test for ten days and let us have vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before thee” (1:12,13, Leupold). “Surely, there would be no harm in trying just such a short experiment,” was the way Daniel argued, and to himself he might have said, “My Lord, whom I serve, will not forsake me, and besides isn’t a simpler, nourishing diet better than all those rich foods?”

The request was granted; the experiment began; “and at the end of ten days their appearance was better, and they were fatter of flesh than all the youths that were eating the royal delicacies. So the steward took away their delicacies and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables” (1:15,16, Leupold). God successfully brought them through their first crisis.

After this, their intensive education continued for the full three years, at which time they were brought before King Nebuchadnezzar himself for an oral examination. “The king interviewed them; and out of the entire number there were none found to be compared with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the king’s service and in all matters of discriminating wisdom, about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all scholars and enchanters throughout his kingdom” (1:19,20, Leupold). In addition, God gave Daniel a special insight into every sort of “visions and dreams” (1:7), an exceptional blessing from on high.

However, we must note one more point, the most important part of this education, something which could never have been received from the wisest teachers in Babylon’s kingdom: “As for these four youths, God gave them...wisdom” (1:17, RSV). This was much different from the knowledge they had received; it was a blessing, a treasure infinitely more valuable than all of the knowledge of the Babylonians, “an enlightenment that...discerns between heathen blandishments and godly truths...that enabled the four to sit in judgment on all secular learning that was offered them and to evaluate it according to the estimate of the all-wise God.”⁴ They had truly learned that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10, etc.)

Surely, we too must have a “wide range of knowledge,” if we are to meet the requirements of our calling adequately. We must be professionally competent, and we must have at least an elementary understanding of many different educational areas. In addition to a certain amount of ability, this will require an earnest dedication to mastering the subject matter that we teach, a thorough knowledge of psychology, and a real proficiency in teaching methods. When we are at school, and after we leave school, and all the while that God gives life and breath, this means that we are to grow and grow. We must grow by reading and studying, grow through conferences and discussions, through departmental investigations and preparation of papers, through summer school and workshops, and through the preparation and completion of a proper program, involving particularly the area for which we are responsible in our ministry.

At one time many within our church had their doubts about pursuing such a graduate program of study or enrichment at a secular university. Far too many people who took such courses began to depart from the

⁴ Leupold, *Daniel*, p. 73.

faith. This essayist shares that fear as far as the study of religion is concerned. Except in rare instances (for example, to become professionally competent in Semitic languages, archaeology, etc.), he believes that most or all of the graduate and undergraduate religion courses should be taken at our colleges or at our own Seminary. The value of such courses is unquestioned.

However, in many other instances those of us who are in elementary or secondary education know that much of the specialized training, highly beneficial for our work, can be obtained only at secular colleges and universities. It is possible to take such courses without harming one's faith; indeed, one's faith may be strengthened thereby, as we know from the examples of Daniel and his three friends, who remained faithful even in the face of death. To be sure, there may be problems involved in this type of training at secular institutions, and part of our calling is to anticipate and to prepare ourselves and our students for such problems.

Among popular philosophies inimical to our faith, philosophies that we cannot avoid at secular schools, are evolution, materialism, refusal to believe in absolute truth, dedication to immorality, and the like. College teachers at secular (and many religious) schools who do not believe in evolution are rare indeed. Sins against the Fourth Commandment (rebellion), the Fifth (abortion), and the Sixth (extra-marital sexual relations) are everywhere condoned or promoted both inside and outside the classroom. Many a teacher has become dedicated to Joseph Fletcher's situation ethics in his effort to excuse or condone just about any sin in the book.

When we or our students meet with such sins, we must, like Daniel, avoid the evil and make confession of our faith. Did not our Lord clearly state, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32,33)?

Exactly how we should make confession of our faith depends upon the circumstances. Yet, it need not be done in the spirit of martyrdom or offensively, but humbly and earnestly, praying that the Holy Spirit may give us the right words to say and the right course to follow.

Sometimes, when we do so make confession of our faith, the results will be real blessings for us and for others, as was the case with Daniel. For example, a student wrote a Scriptural truth in his paper, one that contradicted the instructor's philosophy. The professor graded the paper A with the remark that educators have to be consistent, as this one obviously was. Again, a student confessed her faith in creation as opposed to evolution, and the teacher actually asked to attend her church with her to hear more about this matter.

At other times such a confession will produce wrath, failing marks, or worse. A class was asked to write a theme on some moral problem. When a student wrote on abortion, the paper was graded F with the curt remark that abortion was not a moral problem.

In all these cases our course of action is clear: Do not look at the consequences, but look at God's Word to determine what is right. Then do what is right, and you will not be responsible for the consequences, even if it means ridicule, ostracism, dismissal, or worse.

Yet, more important than all of these matters is wisdom from on high, wisdom which tells us how to judge all things in the light of the Word, wisdom which Daniel possessed in such rich measure. Knowledge of subject matter, understanding of the scientific processes, familiarity with excellent teaching methods, enlightenment regarding the way people learn, all these and many other matters are valuable, but it is vastly more important to know that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Without that there cannot be any Christian education.

This means a true understanding of sin and grace and sanctification; a desire to serve Christ's people with the truth; a determination to have every subject, English, science, history, etc., serve Christ and His Kingdom; a fine sense of discrimination between what is helpful and harmful for the child of God; a knowledge that everything that opposes God's Word is a lie; the ability to lead God's children correctly. This wisdom can be received only from the Word; and we must study that Word diligently, using it to strengthen our faith, and to prove all things by it, holding fast that which is good. Then will our own education and that which we give others truly glorify our God and bless our people.

Daniel, chapter 2, records the first of Nebuchadnezzar's two noteworthy dreams, dreams which God used to proclaim world-shaking messages. Since both dream and interpretation have been extensively treated in

a previous part of this paper, we shall now discuss matters in connection therewith that were then mentioned only cursorily: *Daniel's prayer life and his humility*.

When King Nebuchadnezzar decreed capital punishment for all his wise men, since they were unable to tell and to interpret his dream, Daniel and his friends were also about to be executed. Face to face with death, they did what every Christian does instinctively. They prayed, seeking "mercy of the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish" (2:18, RSV). The prayer reminds us of the apostles' cry six centuries later: "Lord, save us; we perish" (Matt. 8:25).

Daniel's prayer was not an isolated instance. It was but one example of his usual custom, for it was commonly known that he knelt for prayer three times every day (6:10). Nor were his prayers all of the petition type. When, for example, God revealed to him the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he answered with that beautiful psalm of praise, "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever...I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might..." (2:20-23).

Daniel's prayer, incidentally, shows a remarkable acquaintance with Scripture, for every part of it has parallels among other Bible passages written long before his time.⁵

When we consider the multiple responsibilities of the Christian teacher's high calling, and when we recall that we are actually in a position to influence blood-bought souls for time and even for eternity, what else can we do but turn to our God in fervent, regular prayer, like Daniel of old?

That is exactly what our Lord encourages us to do with His "ask...seek...knock" of Matthew 7:7,8; and St. Paul wrote these famous instructions concerning prayer in Colossians 4:2-4: "always maintain the habit of prayer: be both alert and thankful as you pray. Include us in your prayers, please, that God may open for us a door for the entrance of the Gospel. Pray that we may talk freely of the mystery of Christ (for which talking I am in prison in chains), and that I may make this mystery plain to men, which I know is my duty" (Phillips).

How can we confidently approach and continue our weighty work without knowing that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16)? And what better advice is to be found anywhere in regard to this important matter than Dr. Luther's vivid "As soon as the need presses...run quickly into (your) room, fall on (your) knees and say: Lord, here I come; I must have this or that, although it is true, I am unworthy; but look upon my need and my misery and help me for Your honor's sake"?⁶

You ask, "For what should I pray and give thanks?" Let Scripture be your guide. Pray—

"God, be merciful to me a sinner," with the publican (Luke 18:13);

"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," with the father of the tormented child (Mark 9:24);

"O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes," with the Psalmist (119:5);

"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart," with Solomon (I Kings 3:9-14);

Pray for those whom you are instructing, as St. Paul prayed unceasingly for the Romans to whom he was writing (Rom. 1:9).

Pray for your coworkers as St. Paul requested of the Thessalonians (I Thess. 5:25).

Pray for the government, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (I Tim. 2:2).

Pray for your school, for its many students, for adequate financial support, as Jesus prayed on Maundy Thursday evening that our Holy Father would keep His own (John 17:11).

And remember all the while, "in everything give thanks" (I Thess. 5:18).

It would seem that our work would be totally impossible without a regular prayer something like the following paraphrase of Dr. Luther's sacristy prayer:

Lord God, Thou hast placed me in Thy Church as a Christian teacher. Thou seest how unfit I am to administer this great and responsible office. Had I hitherto been without Thy aid and counsel, I

⁵ Leupold, *Daniel*, p. 99.

⁶ Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis, Concordia, 1959), II, 1080, No. 3445.

would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore I call on Thee. I gladly desire to yield and consecrate my mouth and heart to this ministry. I desire to teach the people and I myself would continue to learn. To this end I shall meditate diligently on Thy Word and keep it my constant companion. Use me, dear Lord, as Thy instrument. Only do not forsake me; for if I were left to myself, I would quickly ruin everything. Amen.

Wasn't it Dr. Luther also who said that it takes three things to make a theologian: *Tentatio* (trial, testing), *Oratio* (prayer, request), and *Meditatio* (meditation, contemplation)? There is a great deal of truth in this, and we ought to remember it.

Besides his prayer life, Daniel's conduct reveals him to be a man of marked *humility*. For example, before he revealed the first dream and its interpretation, Daniel specifically disclaimed any such powers for himself. He confessed, "There is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and makes known to King Nebuchadnezzar what should be in the latter days" (2:28), thus refusing to take even a tiny part of the credit for himself.

Again, in his interpretation of the second dream many years later, the one in which God revealed that Nebuchadnezzar would become demented and act like an ox, Daniel humbly, yet plainly and truthfully predicted exactly what would happen to the king because of his pride. Respectfully he admonished Nebuchadnezzar, "Break with thy sins by dealing righteously and with thine iniquities by showing mercy to the righteous" (4:27, Leupold). "Break with your tyranny, your violence, your pride...deal kindly" was the earnest admonition.

Perhaps King Nebuchadnezzar heeded the admonition for a time, but exactly a year later, when he surveyed the glory of Babylon from the roof of his palace, he defied the living God with his boastful, arrogant, "Is not this Babylon the great which I have built as a royal residence by the strength of my own power and for the glory of my majesty?" (4:30, Leupold).

Before he finished speaking, Nebuchadnezzar's sentence was announced by a "voice from heaven...the kingdom is departed from thee" (4:31). Neither was the kingdom returned to him, nor did his madness leave him until he acknowledged "that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (4:32). Then he was cured of his malady. Then, too, the king humbly confessed God's almighty power with his, "I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored Him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation" (4:34).

Later, when the glory of his kingdom increased more than ever, the king expressly proclaimed, "I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (4:37). Nebuchadnezzar had indeed learned his lesson well, and Daniel must have agreed wholeheartedly with his king's thoughts about pride and humility and honor to God, even though it is unclear whether Nebuchadnezzar had become a true child of God.

Yes, Daniel must have been continually tempted to pride because of his exalted position, his wisdom, and his insight, but we repeatedly find him humble, never arrogant, throughout his life. It was a characteristic that he must have cultivated assiduously. This does not mean, of course, that he was completely blameless in this respect.

Humility can scarcely be called an innate characteristic of Christian teachers, while pride and all of its evil results are unquestionably a characteristic of our old Adam. For example, how many of us easily admit that we are wrong about something, especially in our relationships with students? Aren't we more inclined to agree with that imaginary character who complained, "Why is it so difficult for others to admit their faults; I'm sure I would admit mine—if I had any." Don't we at times covet positions that may carry additional prestige in someone's eyes? Are all of us humbly content to serve zealously in a position considered lowly by many? If we are honest with ourselves, must we not admit that we often join the Quaker of old who said to his wife, "All the world is queer but me and thee, and sometimes even thee."

Consider also how, despite the fact that we are committed to an antihierarchical system, pride often causes difficulties in our relationships with one another and sometimes harms the work of the Kingdom.

Pastors, for example, knowingly or unknowingly, may consider themselves on a higher plane than teachers; one teacher is convinced that he knows much more than another, and he isn't a bit hesitant about notifying others of that fact either; principals probably suffer as much from temptations to pride as anyone, although teachers often have a way of keeping them humble.

Since pride is a sin that can wreak much havoc, our Lord repeatedly warns against it and exhorts us to humility. When James and John, sterling characters certainly, vaingloriously sought positions of honor at Jesus' right and left, our Lord answered, "You do not know what you are asking" (Mark 10:38, RSV). When no disciple would do the slave's work on Maundy Thursday evening, Jesus Himself washed their feet, thereby giving them and us an eternally impressive lesson in humility.

Consider also our Lord's devastating words against the proud Pharisees: "All their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi" (Matt. 23:5-7).

Are you listening to Jesus' condemnation? If so, then hear also His continuation: "But be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:8-12).

Why do you suppose that God tells us no less than three times in Scripture that He "resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (Ps. 138:6; Jas. 4:6; I Pet. 5:5)? And why are there so many similar admonitions and exhortations in Scripture, including St. Paul's famous, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:1,2)? It is because we need it.

Should our Lord in His grace give success to our work, as He did it abundantly for Daniel, that is all the more reason to pray with Jacob of old, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant" (Gen. 32:10). The Psalmist also has outstanding advice to every one of us: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake" (Ps. 115:1). We shall probably be more inclined to accept the Psalmist's advice, if we remember and answer correctly the question which St. Paul puts to all of us in I Corinthians 4:7: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

There remains one other characteristic to be considered, the most important of them all: Daniel's *faithfulness*. It is a characteristic which, in its various ramifications, has valuable lessons for us who have been chosen by God as workers in His vineyard. As we discuss this trait, you will undoubtedly notice that various other characteristics are also included that either flow from Daniel's faithfulness or are closely related to it. They include such matters as his resignation to God's will, his convictions, his fearlessness, and his dedication to his work.

Daniel never said it, but everything we know of him implies that he was first of all a child of God and then, secondly, an illustrious statesman who faithfully served various kings and through whom God communicated some world-shaking messages to these kings and to others. Daniel's faith in the Messiah and in the "Kingdom which should...stand forever," which God Himself would erect (2:44), is evident. So is his resolve to serve the living God, regardless of the consequences, something that was mentioned previously in connection with his refusal to eat food from the king's table.

Daniel's faithfulness is all the more remarkable, when we recall the temptations to faithlessness that must have deluged him from every side: He lived in a completely heathen land; he was a member of the world's most affluent society; surely, he was financially prosperous and highly honored; for decades he held some of the very highest governmental offices with all of their concomitant spiritual perils; and his wisdom was so outstanding that it was recognized by a king (4:18), a queen (5:10-12), and a prophet (Ezek. 28:3). Such uniform prosperity, stretching over decades, must have brought with it hundreds of temptations and trials to his faithfulness.

Besides the temptations of prosperity, there were also the dangers of adversity. Chapter 3, for example, tells about the 90 foot golden image, probably representing Babylon's world power, that King Nebuchadnezzar erected and that was to be worshipped by everyone when the musical instruments sounded. Everyone who refused to worship the image was to be thrown into a fiery furnace. Daniel was not directly involved in this episode; in fact, we do not know exactly why he was not present, but his three friends quietly refused to worship the image. When King Nebuchadnezzar, in a rage, gave them a second chance, they stated simply that there was no need for a long defense of their position; if it was in keeping with God's will, He would deliver them from death; but if not, "We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image" (3:18).

Enraged still more, Nebuchadnezzar commanded the fire to be heated seven times hotter and the three men to be thrown into it. That was the precise moment when God worked the outstanding miracle. In fact, He worked at least five startling miracles before the astounded king and his counselors: 1) Suddenly there were four men in the furnace; 2) not one of these men was bound, as the three had been just a moment previously; 3) they were not lying down, as one might expect from being bound, but were walking about; 4) they were completely unhurt, while the fire was so intense that their executioners were all killed instantly; 5) and, most striking of all, "the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Leupold translates "a son of the gods").

Unquestionably, Daniel would have been equally faithful in the face of death, had he been present, as we know from his later experience in the lions' den. Granted, that was a somewhat different example, because in the case of his three friends, they were severely tempted in a more or less accidental way. At least, there was no thought of persecuting God's children. In Daniel's later case, however, there was a distinct attempt to persecute him in connection with his faith.

At the time of his experience in the lion's den, Daniel must have been at least 80 years old, venerable and prominent. Because of their jealousy of Daniel, the other courtiers had succeeded in having Darius, who otherwise seems to have been a fairly competent Oriental king, decree a rather silly law: "Anyone who shall make a (religious) petition of any god or man for thirty days, except of thee, O king (who was regarded as a deity), shall be cast into the den of lions" (6:7, Leupold).

Daniel made no attempt whatsoever to evade the issue, but "He went into his house...and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (6:10), a fine example of the eternal truth expressed in Psalm 118:6: "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?"

When the courtiers thronged in to report Daniel's conduct, King Darius undoubtedly realized that he had been taken. He tried but could not find a way of rescuing Daniel. He ultimately gave the command to throw him into the den, saying, "Thy God, whom thou servest unremittingly, may He deliver thee" (6:16, Leupold). Then, with sincere and sleepless grief, the king retired to his room.

Imagine King Darius' and Daniel's joy when God again worked a striking miracle and preserved Daniel all night long in the midst of such obvious perils! Then Darius commanded Daniel to be brought forth and his accusers and their families to be thrown to the lions, which "broke all their bones before they ever touched the bottom of the den" (6:24, Leupold).

Daniel did not gloat over his enemies' frightful end, but he again expressed his faith in God with that quiet, confident, "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouth" (6:22).

Daniel's faith in God also showed itself in the faithful performance of his work for his superiors. Not even his enemies could find a single matter in which they could accuse him of unfaithfulness: "They could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful" (6:4).

This faithful service in the employ of various monarchs continued until Daniel must have been in his 80's or 90's. After serving King Nebuchadnezzar from about 600 to 560 B.C., we hear that he still served during the reigns of Cyrus the Persian and his deputy, King Darius, after 538 B.C. He did not retire at 65.

Daniel had one other horrible experience: at the feast given by King Belshazzar, chapter 5. At this drunken orgy, the king insolently called for the sacred gold and silver vessels, taken by King Nebuchadnezzar from Solomon's Temple, "that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein" (5:2). That was an act of almost unparalleled degeneracy, a deliberate defiance of the true God, a frightful blasphemy almost unheard of even in the heathen world.

That was the moment, then, in which the hand wrote these unforgettable, terrifying words upon the wall: “*MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.*” When Daniel was called at the queen’s urging, he interpreted the handwriting as follows: “*MENE*: God hath numbered thy kingdom and determined its destruction. *TEKEL*: Thou hast been weighed in the balances and hast been found wanting. *PERES* (“U”= and, *Pharsin* plural of *Peres*, meaning both “broken” and “Persians”): Thy kingdom is broken and given to the Medes and the Persians” (5:26–28, Leupold). Daniel surely experienced heathen debauchery at its worst. Yet, praise be unto our God, He kept Daniel faithful through it all.

If Daniel lived in times that presented temptations to his faithfulness, what shall we say about our perilous times? True, we face little, if any, physical persecution because of our faith, for we live in an age that promotes toleration for almost everything, especially for sins and doctrinal aberrations. Yet, we should not forget that religious persecution can break out at any moment, as Daniel experienced it and as our Lord clearly foretold: “Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you...they will also persecute you” (John 15:19,20).

Most of us do not even find ourselves persecuted incidentally, like Daniel’s three friends, because we cannot accede to certain widely-held customs of our day. We may be ridiculed for believing in creation instead of evolution, but we are rarely persecuted for our belief with more than an F on a paper or for the course. We have few problems with the state regarding the maintenance of our schools; in fact, many states are seeking ways to help finance religious schools. Thus, almost everywhere we look, we see the absence of incidental or deliberate persecution, something that once jeopardized the lives of Daniel and his three friends.

Nonetheless, we are surrounded by temptations to faithlessness in many respects. We live, for example, in such an affluent society, that the average 1971 income per family in our county was more than \$10,000, some five or six times more than some of us received in the early days of our ministry. In some areas the unions have become the peoples’ god, who takes care of them from the cradle to the grave. Everywhere we are surrounded by people who continually want to do less work for more pay. How difficult it is to remember, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (I John 2:15), when we are surrounded by comforts and luxuries that the richest men in the world could not have imagined a century ago. How easy it is to follow the world!

Then there is the general apathy of many church members. If our church is a criterion for yours, you had considerably less than one-half the number of people in church on Quasimodogeniti Sunday than you had the previous week. And do we really support our churches financially in a manner that is anywhere near a proper proportion of our income? Everywhere we have parents who, given the choice between a school where God’s Word, the one thing needful, is studied every day, and a completely secular education, say, “We shall send our children to a public school.” We are continually tempted to accept such apathy.

Furthermore, the world in which we live everywhere promotes the vilest kinds of sins against the commandments of our God. The increase in crime is much greater than the increase in population. A Madison house of murder, under court protection, performs two dozen abortions a day. A national magazine features a story on drop-out wives, who leave their husbands and their children for a career in business. VD, excepting only the common cold, is America’s most prevalent communicable disease, with about three quarters of a million cases expected to be reported in 1972 (only one in four is reported). Homosexuals cry everywhere that “gay is good.” It will not take any of us long to add to the list of these abominations. How can God’s children fail to be affected by it all?

The worst sin of all, one that could be compared to Belshazzar’s blasphemy, is the insolent and haughty denial of almost every part of God’s Word by millions of people within the visible church. It is not necessary to catalog the manifold aberrations, like the denials of creation, the miracles, and even the resurrection of our Lord. But what shall we say of members who attempt to crucify their Synodical president because he is trying to preserve pure doctrine, one of his major duties? When we look at the religious scene in America, doesn’t it seem at times as if we were about ready to cry to our God with Elijah of old (I Kings 19:14) that we are the only ones left who truly believe His Word? Yes, indeed, we and our people are deluged by temptations on every side, exactly like Daniel.

How blessed we are, if our God keeps us faithful in the face of these manifold temptations. How blessed if everyone could exclaim with the great Apostle Paul, “I know whom I have believed” (II Tim. 1:12). Then we have the happy assurance that “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38,39). Then we shall never lack a single necessity in this life nor in the world to come, for “He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

Yes, surely, temptations to faithlessness will come as long as we live here in time. Therefore we need to pray regularly with the father whose son was ill, “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24). And God in heaven will surely keep us faithful who look to Him. In difficulties He will move us to cry with the Psalmist, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble...the Lord of Hosts is with us” (Ps. 46:1,7). He will give us the sure confidence, as we approach the work that He has given us to do, that “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

Then, after the Lord has heard and helped us, kept us serving Him faithfully, and preserved us unspotted from the world, we can praise Him with the Psalmist of old: “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles” (Ps. 34:6).

Thus God has spoken to us 20th century teachers through His servant Daniel about the world in which he lived, about his education, his humility, his prayer life, his faithfulness, and their applications for our lives. May our God’s message bless us, one and all!