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**RESURRECTION**

**T. Austin-Sparks**  
**H. Foster**

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*Volume 214*

# RESURRECTION

Chapter one THE INHERITANCE SECURED T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter two AS HE DID AFORETIME H. Foster

## THE INHERITANCE SECURED

*"Now it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it, as I spake unto Moses. From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be strong, and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left ... Have not I commanded thee? Be strong, and of good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:1-9).*

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).*

If we needed something to convince us that the Old Testament has a meaning beyond itself for ourselves, this word of Peter surely is a word of each convincing. You read Peter, and you know quite well that Peter was a man of Israel; he was indeed a Jew; and he, in his very veins, carried the history of his nation; and he knew the whole story — it was ever with him. As we both hear him on the day of Pentecost, and read him in his letters, we find that that history is coming up continually and very fully. But when we come to this letter of Peter, we find that he has moved completely off of the merely historical and earthly ground, and is writing and speaking as a member of the New Israel, and is taking up the language and the thoughts of the Old and bringing them into the New. And you find that you have these several corresponding features between what is in the book of Joshua, and in Peter's letters. He uses the word 'resurrection' as the basis and beginning of everything. The first chapter of the book of Joshua is just that, is it not? It is through the Jordan at its flood, and out on to the other side. It is indeed the story of resurrection. And we know, from the book, what it was unto; it was unto 'an inheritance'. Peter takes up that idea here, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ unto an inheritance ...". The difference, of course, with Peter as a Christian, and Peter as a Jew, is that he adds this word 'incorruptible', and 'undefiled'; that is something better, something more than the old. Nevertheless, the idea that the resurrection is unto an inheritance is common to both. "Unto a living hope" — well, Peter carried in his heart at one time the great hope of Israel. It was a temporal hope, an earthly hope; a hope for the realisation of which they lived continually. When we come into the New Testament we find there were those in Jerusalem that were waiting for the realisation of that 'hope of Israel'. But Peter says, We have found it in the resurrection of Jesus Christ; something so much greater, so much more than all we hope for as Jews, we have found in Christ — "a living hope". Our language is not good enough for the translation of his actual words — 'a living hope'. Resurrection inheritance, a living hope, and then, all to be reached, arrived at, possessed, through conflict. So it was in the book of Joshua. The

inheritance, every foothold of it, was going to be disputed, and only possessed and appropriated by conflict. And you are not far into this first letter of Peter before you arrive at that — ‘manifold trials’. ‘Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold trials’. Every bit of the inheritance is possessed through some fresh trial, some new phase of the conflict, some new kind of conflict.

We can begin this consideration by noting that this book of Joshua, as foreshadowing what we have in the New Testament in a spiritual way, makes it perfectly clear that, what we call ‘salvation’ is never intended by God to be an end in itself. We have limited the meaning of ‘salvation’ to ‘being saved’, perhaps from hell, perhaps from sin. We had that glorious song of Moses and Israel on the resurrection side of the Red Sea, “Thou wilt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance ...”.

You are so familiar with this that it has lost some of its power and appeal. And yet this very truth is the truth of our salvation continually. It is the truth that comprehends salvation from beginning to end. You will never understand the working out of salvation, and the working in of salvation, and all that the Spirit of God is doing with you. Therefore you will never be able to get through the ‘manifold trials’, through the conflict which persists to the end, unless you really do keep ever present to mind that it is something more and more of the inheritance, which is Christ, that lies within this conflict. You must understand that you have not just been brought out of Egypt to be landed on the edge of a Wilderness, and there to stay for the duration; you would not agree to that. You would agree that there must be a purpose in it; and being of God, there must be a very great purpose. Well, that is just it; ‘unto an inheritance’; and that inheritance lies implicit in every trial that comes into your life and mine; in every testing; in every bit of conflict and pressure. The inheritance, that is, something more, into which we have been called, is implicit in all that. That is the issue all the time. And we must be alive to this, and when we come to the next bit of the difficulty, of the trial, the conflict, the pressure, to say: ‘There is some

treasure buried in this; there is something of Christ implicit in this; I have got to have it, I have got to be able to put my hand upon it, and make it mine. Or, to come to the words in Joshua, to put my foot down on it, and say, 'I take that in the name of the Lord.' It is going to be like that to the end. The tragedy of the book of Joshua, as you know, is that they stopped too soon.

There is a great and far-reaching purpose in our salvation, and that, in itself, is a tremendous challenge to us. There are so many people, so many Christians, who do not like that idea, and do not want that, and who say: Let us be satisfied with being saved: it is a glorious thing to be saved; it is a grand thing to know your sins forgiven and that you are going to heaven, and that you are not under judgment and condemnation. Now, the book of Joshua, and the whole New Testament, tells you that 'being saved' is something more than that. Salvation is a far greater thing than that. But that is the little thing, the little bit that you can enjoy and be pleased with, and every day rejoice in. But the rest, this way of conflict, this way of testing, this fuller way, well, we do not want that; that makes the Christian life far too complicated; let us have simple salvation, the 'simple' Christian life. What I am saying is this, that you will miss nine-tenths of your salvation if you stay there; you will miss the very thing for which you have been brought out — 'your inheritance'; we are saved unto an 'inheritance'.

"... Begotten again unto a living hope; unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven ...". This inheritance is secured unto us by the cross of the Lord Jesus. That is the interpretation of the 'Jordan'. The ark, typical of Christ, went right into the Jordan when the Jordan 'overflowed all its banks'. Mark you, it did not go into a pathway already made, it made the pathway; it was when the feet of the priests that bare the ark touched the waters that the way was made. It made the way for the people, and it stood there, right in the depths, with the floods all around holding off death, defeating death, and robbing it of its power. It secured the inheritance, right there in the Jordan, for the people. And when the Lord said this to Joshua: "Every place that the

sole of your feet shall tread upon I have given", He not only meant that He had given it in covenant to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He meant that He had secured it, typically, in the Jordan. For all the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would have been futile but for that triumph over Jordan that day. You can have all the covenants you can find, but here you have got to face something that stands across your path, and says No! Death is a tremendous power to nullify anything, and until it is overcome there is no hope and no inheritance. But by the resurrection from the dead, it is all secured. And we know quite well that Joshua and Israel moved into possession on the strength of what had happened in the Red Sea and in the Jordan. That was always their mighty background of sufficiency.

In Exodus 15 Philistia and Edom, and all the rest of them are thrown into complete consternation by what happened at the Red Sea; they faint and are completely paralysed. And we know that, when they came to Jericho, Rahab said to the spies: "We heard what the Lord did at the Red Sea, and there was no more heart left in us." The nations melt away ... You see, the thing is secured by the mighty triumph of the cross. And all the enemies are as already defeated. It is a mighty ground from which and on which we move. It is all secured in the cross of the Lord Jesus.

I wish I could always remember this, and act upon it. What a difference it would make, when we come up against some new foe, difficulty or obstruction, something that stands across the path, and says, No, you shall not pass here. We say, But ... you have already been defeated; there is no question of the issue of victory. I bring a victory with me; I am not coming to *fight* a victory, I bring a victory. You see, that is the truth, that we need to know in life, that we are bringing a victory into the situation. It is behind us. It is underneath us all the time.

This inheritance, note, now is a heavenly inheritance. "... unto an inheritance, reserved in heaven" — in heaven! I am very glad of that, and I do not believe that that just means 'afterwards in heaven'. In the New Testament you will find that already we are in

the heavenly conflict, and it is in the 'heavenlies' that we have got to possess our inheritance. These are heavenly things; they are very much more real than earthly things. You see, the conquest of the land of Canaan, and the overcoming of the seven nations, is not world evangelisation. That is not what you are dealing with here. This is not possessing the nations; this is not getting in and taking hold of earthly positions at all in the beginning. This book of Joshua corresponds to the Letter to the Ephesians. It is the 'heavenly' warfare; it is the 'heavenly' inheritance; it is coming now into actual possession of our 'heavenly' things in Christ. "He hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", but although He has done it, we are not in possession of them. There follows, as you know, the conflict to possess what is our own. We are simply fighting a heavenly warfare for what is ours by right. This is not something that has to do with world evangelisation other than perhaps, in evangelisation you do meet the spiritual forces and they have to be overcome. But we are not talking about that now. This is the heavenly life of the Church of God, where it has to come into its rightful place of ascendancy with Christ in the heavenlies, and of growing spiritual enrichment through Him.

The next thing, note, is that not one foothold will be appropriated without great conflict and faith. Those two things go together; in a sense, they are one — conflict and faith — for after all, we do find that the issue in conflict is just faith, is it not. Well, that is shown to be the very inclusive basis of this whole book, with Jericho. If there are seven nations; if there is this completeness of spiritual conflict and conquest, represented by the number 'seven' symbolically, it is seven times round Jericho, and then on the seventh day, seven times again. It is not by might nor by power; it is not by any human source or resource at all; the utter foolishness of silently walking around for a week — what kind of a campaign is that! But there is a mightier force in that silent going round than there is in Jericho, or in the whole country. And you know that very well by the way in which you look at it. If that kind of thing can throw down a place like Jericho, and conquer that land, and all its inhabitants and



armies, well it must be something very big! What a potent silence! No sword was drawn; no weapon was brought into commission; no blow was struck until faith had brought down the situation. And the wall fell down, and then they went up, and they went on. There is a mighty power in faith, and that is why it is the focal point of all this mighty conquest.

By faith and through conflict we can get through anywhere, and through anything. And I think that conflict begins on this matter of faith. It is just there that it begins. Conflict! Let me say it again: not one single foothold of your spiritual, heavenly inheritance, not that measure of Christ, is going to come into your possession, except through conflict. And that conflict is the conflict or warfare of faith. Have you got that? This is where we perhaps sometimes make a mistake — we think of 'faith' as an element, as a kind of attribute, something that we have got to work up, an attitude that we have to take, something that we produce — No! The essence of faith is the object of faith, or the ground of faith. And here this book teaches us this, that the faith upon which the whole of this mighty conquest was made, was faith in what happened in the Jordan. The Lord could do that in the Jordan, and in the Red Sea; then He can do anything. If Christ has done that in His cross, He can do anything. He can meet this situation today, and the next one tomorrow! There is sufficient resource in Christ's cross to meet any situation. That is where faith is tested. Did His death really mean that this thing has been measured and swallowed up? Is His death sufficient for this? Is His resurrection sufficient for this? The estimate of the cross of the Lord Jesus, His death and His resurrection, will be the measure of our possession through faith.

There is another point here, as you notice, specially underlined as we read. The battle is not only the battle of faith, which is something in our spirits; but there is another way in which the battle begins within. Before there could be any overcoming of those great enemies in the land, before there could be any conquest and victory through the whole territory, there had to be a fundamental victory in the people in the matter of courage. Do you notice that? The Lord

repeatedly said that to Joshua: "Be strong and of good courage ... only be strong and very courageous. Have I not commanded thee, Be strong and of good courage." What is courage, after all? Well, courage is having a good heart, a strong heart. Yes, courage — that is where the battle is won or lost, in the first place — whether you are in this with a heart. And the enemy is so often successful in defeating conquest and progress, and appropriation, by disheartening us. If the enemy can dishearten us, take the heart out of us, to rob us of incentive he has got us. He will hold the land all right; he will keep everything from us, and us from it. Oh, it is a big battle. There is plenty of discouragement and things against us. The Lord says, "Be strong and of good courage ... only be strong and very courageous. Have I not commanded thee, Be strong and of good courage." The Lord Jesus knew the need of that; He was constantly telling His disciples about it.

May the Lord, today, revive our courage, revive our hearts, restore to us incentive and motive. And in saying it to us by His Spirit, may He bring it to us. You know, there is to be a reaction on our part. The very least reaction that we make to the Lord's bidding in this matter is : Lord, yes I am with You for all that You want. In myself, I am weak, I am without courage; I lay hold on your strength. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

You can see that this is not just history in the Old Testament; this is not just interpreting the Bible; this is really defining what so many of us know to be very real and true. If we thought when we came to the Lord Jesus that it was just all going to be — Now we are saved and happy; everything is all right — we have lived to prove it is otherwise. There are many enemies straddling our path, many fierce foes who are going to dispute every foothold of the way. But, says Peter, 'Think it not strange concerning the fiery trials ...'. Think it not strange! Was he speaking to people who were saying, Well, this is not what we expected; we did not expect this when we came to the Lord; this is something altogether out of our calculation; this is a strange sort of thing. No, he says, 'Think it not strange ...'.

This is native to the whole business; it is a part of it. And that is perhaps just where you need fresh courage. You did not reckon for this; you did not calculate with this; you did not think the Christian life was going to be like this. You have sometimes felt, Lord, if this is Christianity, get me out as quickly as you can! Have you felt like that? Well, let us be quite honest; we have sometimes felt, Oh, to get out of this terrible conflict, this challenging, hard way; this is not what we reckoned on. But remember, there stands over it all this ... "an inheritance, undefiled, incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who through the power of God, are guarded through faith unto a salvation waiting to be revealed in the last time".

And perhaps that last phrase will cheer us most. It is the 'last time' and the revelation is soon going to be made!

*T. Austin-Sparks*



## **AS HE DID AFORETIME**

*"And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem); and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10)*

I am going to speak again about conflict. I have no doubt that Daniel felt that the early part of his life was full of much conflict. By the time we reach chapter 6, he was an old man, and no doubt, would have liked to have found himself in something a bit easier and less strenuous. But it cannot be, for this is the book of the Kingdom, the Kingdom of the heaven; and those that are associated with that Kingdom find that right through to the climax it is bound to be warfare and conflict.

The people of Israel, in their experiences, portray especially with Jordan, the power of resurrection. In addition to those, there are stories of individuals in the Old Testament, who, by their own personal experience, set forth this most vital truth. We think of Joseph and his resurrection experience; we think of Jonah. Daniel, and Daniel 6 in particular, is another reminder that this is God's way through, and supremely, this is God's way to the throne.

If you look at the beginning of the chapter, you will find at the end of verse 3 that some definite decision had been come to about Daniel, and that was for his advancement. The king thought to set him over the whole realm. That is the proposition, and that explains the whole story. You will notice that, in addition to the many satraps

under him, there were, so we are told in verse 2, two other presidents with him, and the whole story of their scheming to destroy Daniel seems to have arisen from this decision that Daniel should be promoted. You come to the end of the chapter and you find it happened! For a good deal of the time it looked most unlikely; the method and means by which the Lord made it possible was of the strangest — that is to say, strange to our way of thinking — nevertheless, in full harmony with all that the Word tells us, and especially with that which is supremely set forth in the Person of the Lord Jesus. This is the way to advancement; this is God's way to the throne — the way of death and resurrection.

That lions' den was a kind of grave, and Daniel had to go down into the grave, but since he was God's man, and in right relationship with the Lord, he lost nothing, and gained everything by that descent. His rivals went down into the same grave, and they stayed there. There are no more presidents left at the end of this story, and no more satraps. They encompassed their own destruction, and Daniel is found, not by any effort of his own, not by straining on his part, but by a maintained position of absolute faith in God, where he was intended to be, in the place of ascendancy. That is God's way with us all. We, too, in His amazing mercy, are marked out for advancement, chosen for the throne. That will explain with us, as with Daniel, the fierceness of the opposition, the peculiar bitterness of the conflict. There are such great issues involved that will call us to seek anew, by Daniel's example, to find the spiritual secret by which God is able to realise His purpose, and to bring us out and up to where He wants us to be.

Most of the story gives us the picture of a peculiarly helpless man. It is just as well, when we are considering this whole question of conflict, for us to realise what an essentially spiritual matter it is. Even here in the Old Testament, we are confronted with the experience of a man who had to get through wholly and solely on spiritual ground. In other realms, his position was no good to him; his earthly authority, human power, his friends, counted for nothing. Indeed, the popular idea of the story of Daniel so often forgets the

man he was, thinks of some young stripling being thrown to the lions. He was not that at all but rather a man of great experience and standing, and yet none of that counted at this time. We see him hurried away, thrust into the den of lions, as it might seem, quite helpless; and then, taken out again, without any effort of his own. And we are reminded of how helpless we are in so many ways, and by the deliberate choice of the Lord. For the real crux of the chapter is the verse that we have read, which shows that, though Daniel may have been helpless, or seemed to be so, in circumstances and before men, it was his spiritual strength, and his steadfastness of faith that made everything possible. The key to the whole emergence from the conflict, in such absolute full victory, is found in this verse, and particularly in these last four words "as he did aforetime". There is something tremendously impressive about a man, beset and attacked, and apparently overwhelmed from every side, who in quiet dignified persistence, just goes quietly on with God.

He had this position because he was a man of vision, and of very definite vision. It is not merely a question of 'having faith' in a general way, or praying for this or that. We would not understand the setting if we did not appreciate that here was a man who had come by the mercy of God to see and understand His purposes. And, moreover, who had adjusted his life to that vision. The 'three times a day', the 'open windows', the proceeding 'as he did aforetime', all point to the fact that here was a man who had come to understand what God intended, what God wished, what God was working for, and had given himself wholeheartedly to that. He kept himself in God's direction and devoted to God's end day in, day out, fair days, foul days, 'as he did aforetime'. Of course, that is the deeper reason for the challenge. I have spoken of the more superficial and human side of the jealousies obtaining in this heathen court, but there is something deeper than that. There always is! And the human enemies are motivated by forces of which they themselves are probably unaware. Here is a man who has seen what God means, what God wants; here is a man who has given himself utterly, wholly, without reserve, to God's end. It is no wonder that all kinds

of things happen to seek to deflect him, to turn him aside, to get him away from that.

I am rather taking it for granted that I am speaking to people who like Daniel, have vision, and my message is this: If the Lord has revealed something of His purpose and His will in His Son, He calls, not merely for people who are informed and able to inform others about it, but for those who have a set way of life. I was going to say, 'routine' — well, we are not always happy about routine, but this 'three times a day' of Daniel was a good routine, it was a spiritual habit, it was a way of life that he had adopted. I want to say that that will bring you into all kinds of cross-currents of conflict and perhaps has done so already. In the midst of that the greatest single factor for the triumph of the will of God is a heart that refuses to be moved, a setness which is a right setness — 'as he did aforetime'. "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed ...".

Some of you will be saying, I wish I were that sort of person, unmoved, steady, calm ... etcetera. Well, don't wrongly imagine that it was Daniel's natural temperament that governed him in this. If you do think so, I would remind you of the kind of man he could be: "He came near where I stood; and when he came, I was affrighted and fell on my face" (8:17). That is more like me, more like you, you will feel! "I, Daniel, fainted ..." (v. 27). There is something of the inner, secret history of the man. Turn over to chapter 10:12: "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel." So don't let us imagine that Daniel was the kind of man who never had an inward quaver, a fear or a tendency to faint. No, all that is possible, all that is in the secret of his life, but nevertheless, so with the secret of persistence and continuance given to him. Though he may uncover his hidden life and tell you that is the kind of man he could be, when you look at him, you don't feel like that. You feel, here is a man who cannot be moved; here is a man who will not be deflected. Without any sense of strain, but in quiet dignity, he is just going straight on in the way of the Lord. With all the plotting, planning, scheming and signing of decrees, it makes not the slightest difference to him — he just goes on the same as ever before.

Now it is just this very thought that I want to bring to you for, make no mistake about it, if the Lord has given us any true vision of Himself and His will, we are already, or shall very soon find ourselves to be, in the midst of that which would rather make us close our windows and close our doors, and shut down. Thank the Lord, Daniel was not that sort of man, and the Lord grant that we may not be those sort of people. And I want us to look closer to the story, if so be that we may find the explanation of this quiet confident steadfastness — ‘three times a day as he did aforetime’. And I would suggest to you that the first reason why Daniel was able, so strongly and calmly to go on with God is found in the largeness of his vision. If your vision is largely wrapped up in yourself, or your ministry, or your circumstances, or your surrounding when hell breaks loose upon you, you will not know where you are. But Daniel has been given a vision of something so much bigger than himself, and so have we. Indeed, is not that the very crux of our vision, that it brings us into the largest realm of God’s universal and eternal purpose in Christ? And it is the largeness of the vision that will save us in the hour of conflict. Here is Daniel in his house at a certain time, but the vision which he has is of something far greater in time-range than that immediate moment. It goes back a long way. The windows open to Jerusalem take him back to an original purpose of God for a people, not just back to some personal recollections that he might have had of Jerusalem for they would be poor ones. And we cannot just live in our own recollections, or our own past experience; we need something bigger than that. We are in what has been conceived in eternity, and realised in Christ in His Cross, and if just for the moment, the day, the week, the little time span, in which we are found, there is a shaking and a rocking, and we are perplexed and wondering, ‘What is going to happen now?’ We may be saved if we can look back far enough, and see the great range of the vision into which the Lord has brought us. Not only back, but forward, on and on. You will notice it says, Not only did he pray, but he “gave thanks before His God”. And while I am sure he could find much cause for thanksgiving in the past, to the man



of vision, and the man of faith, the real motive for thanksgiving is in the future. Let hell rage if necessary, let Daniel be swept off the face of the earth, the purposes of God will go on; God will realise His end. And this little experience of the moment is saved, when the man is lifted out of the moment into the great ranges of God's purpose. We are meant to be people of eternity; we are meant to view this present, difficult, problematical position of ours in the light of eternity. It may be true that, just for the moment, where I am, the decree is signed, and everything seems to be hopeless so far as I am concerned. But this is no personal vision, or personal ministry, or personal affair at all that I am involved in. It is the eternal purpose that God has to glorify His Son, so I will stand fast, because I believe that I am associated with that. And it is largeness that lifts me out of my pettiness.

Not only as to time, but as to locality. Daniel is in a chamber, not a large chamber, we presume, but the window is open, and he is not looking at his own chamber, he is looking at a city. Only the eye of faith can see it, but the eye of faith can see it! It can see, not just the little, local, confined, unpromising circumstances in which we are found, but the vast, beautiful God-filled glory of His City. That is what saved Daniel, and it is what will always save us. There is a sense in which men who are greatly pressed, tempted to give up, to despair, to capitulate, can only find a way through by being associated with some cause which will go on and triumph, which must go on and triumph whatever happens to them. And in the spiritual realm, what a cause we have, what a cause! If our thought is — if Daniel's thought was — How can I safeguard my own position? How can I preserve myself? What must I do that I can survive? The probability is that he will make terms with his enemy, or in some way capitulate. But, when, with his window open, he sees God is going on, God's purposes will be fulfilled, they will survive, they are what matters, then he finds that he forgets himself. And the great issue that comes to him is not, Shall I survive? but, Can I be faithful? I must be faithful because of the very vastness and implication of the issue. And you will notice that that *was* carried into

every part of his life. It was not only true, though it was supremely true, on his knees, in the prayer chamber, and in the moment of testing, but it was true all the day, and every day, in the smallest affairs of his daily life (verse 4) "he was found faithful". It all fits into the picture of the man, 'found faithful', because, though so small and insignificant in himself, he realised his association with a vast and supreme divine purpose which must prevail. The personal gets swallowed up, not lost, mark you. This was the means, God's means, of bringing Daniel through; he did not lose. We do not lose when we forget ourselves; we lose when we think too much about ourselves. Here is a man lifted right out of the personal. Had he considered it supremely important that he should survive, it would have been quite simple for him to close the windows and close the door! He was no mere slave in Babylon, and he was no enemy of the kings. On the contrary, he could have found in seclusion perfect, personal safety. But where would Jerusalem be? Where would the purposes of God for His people be? No! He is committed and must be seen to be committed to the vision that had been given him.

While in one sense, we must forget ourselves, and be taken up with something so much bigger than ourselves, in a right way how important it is to be committed, and to be seen to be committed. We don't know how much depended in other lives, among the people of God as a whole, on this steadfast continuance of this one man. None of us knows how much may depend upon our faithful persistence in committal to the vision that the Lord has given us. None of us gathering in companies, however small, and however apparently insignificant, know how much depends upon our faithfulness, our committal, and our continuance on the ground and the basis of the vision which the Lord has given to us. In a sense, we do not matter at all; in another sense, it matters supremely that we should be true to the Lord. That is what I mean by a large vision — not large and vague, and that has no effect on the life; not large in the sense that we have the feeling that we have no particular responsibilities, and it will go on whether we are true or not. No, large in the sense of ennobling, of inspiring, of making us realise how important it is

to be faithful to the Lord. Not important to avoid the den of lions; not important to save ourselves from difficulty; not important to justify ourselves or fight for ourselves — we can leave all that with the Lord. But, important to be true; important not to be moved; important to stand fast — ‘as he did aforesaid’.

And then, secondly, I think the secret of this act of Daniel is found in the way in which the Lord was so real to him. He had many visions, but he had one supreme vision. None of the particular events and concerns of Daniel can be without its significance, for the Word of God is never without meaning; but, if we begin to look at things as things, we have missed the heart of his vision, which was not ‘things’, but the Lord. If we are thinking of the Kingdom, we must realise that the Kingdom takes its character from the King. And because Daniel knew the Lord, and kept his eyes on the Lord, he was saved from being deflected from his course of faithfulness. You notice, the chamber he was in was not a study; at least, he was not studying at this time. It was an audience-chamber with the Lord. It was not the ‘things’, the ideas, the details, though they are all important in their place but the central figure of the Lord which gives importance to everything. He went home and knelt down on his knees, not merely as a matter of ritual, to say his prayers, but as a matter of communion before his God. That is important; when we come to the New Testament, there is nothing without its significance. When we come to the unfolding of the House of God, its principles and its orders, everything must be given due weight. It is wrong and extremely perilous for us to overlook or evade the injunctions, the teachings, the admonitions, the explicit statements of the Word of God. But we know that does not necessarily represent vision. When you have all the principles, ways and teaching about the House of God, you have got something empty unless it is filled with the Owner of the House, the Son over the House. It is the Lord Jesus who gives character to everything. Daniel has had a vision; it is a vast vision but it is all concentrated in the Person of the Lord. And when the enemies come to batter him, to challenge him, to threaten him, to crush him, he is saved, not because he

knows all the facts, or follows all the rules, so much as because he keeps close to the Lord 'as he did aforetime'. And that vision of the Lord meant the eclipse of his enemies. They sound a fairly imposing crowd. In verse 7, "the presidents, the deputies, the satraps, the counsellors, and the governors ...". It was a long list and a formidable one but Daniel just puts it away in his desk, and goes home to talk to the Lord.

Oh, how important it is to have our eyes on the Lord! It does not mean that Daniel ignores his enemies, or pretends that they do not exist. It means that he realises that the great answer to his enemies is found in fellowship with his Lord, and at all costs, he must not be drawn away from that committal and that communion which represents the heart of the purpose of God. It can be very negative to be seeking to deal with the enemies. I am afraid, that, for the children of God, not infrequently, motives and actions, and activities, tend to become negative rather than positive. That is a great danger. We shall never reach God's end by chasing the negatives; we shall answer the negative by pursuing the positive!

And Daniel, you notice, is not turned aside unduly, to pray, if at all, about his own position, or his own circumstances. It is the crises that find us out, is it not? Daniel came into a terrific crisis, and the crisis found him a man so firmly established in the Lord that he could just go quietly on. The devil will always divert us from the main end if he possibly can; He will always have us pursuing this or that, maybe something that he provides that we like — and how many diversions there are in the things of the Lord to draw us away from the central fact. Or it may be things that we do not like that we react against — and as long as we can be diverted, he will not fail to provide them to divert us! If you have any particular point that draws you out, that draws you away, that gets you hot or offended, or chasing it in some way or other, the devil will provide it for you every day, as long as he can keep your eyes off the great vision, keep you from going to that prayer chamber, keep you from the communion with the Lord. 'As he did aforetime'; because the Lord filled his vision the enemies could only be seen, as they should

always be seen, in right relationship with Him. Notice that Ephesians 6 is not the first chapter in the letter to the Ephesians, it is the last. The vision will always produce the conflict, but you cannot live a life merely of conflict. It is the positive vision that we must pursue and fight for.

Daniel not only had his enemies eclipsed, he had even his friends eclipsed. What had happened to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? Were they still alive? Were they not there? We do not know. But we do know this — there are experiences — not contradictions to fellowship (God forbid!), not the weakening of the bonds of fellowship in Christ which must never be weakened; but experiences that we must go through alone with the Lord. Maybe those three were praying for him, and so the bonds of fellowship were just as true. But you notice, this time he did not go and ask them to pray for him; he had done that before; he had to go straight on with the Lord. And he could go on with the Lord, for the Lord filled his vision. That will not weaken fellowship — you need not worry about that — it will strengthen it, if we keep the Lord in the central place. He not only had them, he had Darius who was his friend. In fact Darius spent the day first of all trying to avoid this committal, and then sat up all night worrying about it. He was really concerned for him; and a most influential person. But it does not say, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went to the palace to have a talk with Darius. It says that he went straight to the Lord. Oh, how much of weakness among the people of God would be avoided if we went straight to the Lord, especially in such times of stress and strain, not to the enemies, not even to our friends, but to the Lord. And you remember that was the impression he gave all around him; not as a man who knew a lot of things, but as a man who knew God. Darius said to him, “Thy God will deliver thee”. When he called him out afterwards, he proclaims the ‘God of Daniel’ as the living God. Here is the testimony of a man who has face to face communion with God. And that was what brought him through — and that, and that alone will bring us through. A great vision, but above all, a great Lord!

And thirdly, Daniel was saved because he was so convinced as to the power of prayer. Daniel should know a bit about power; he has been at the seat of it for a good few years. He saw it exercised when he was brought as a captive from Jerusalem. But now, for years, he has been at the heart of the greatest world empire, the 'head of gold'; he has seen the tremendous authority of a man who was absolute despot, at whose word people could be slain or spared. And when he has seen it all, he says, I would rather get on my knees and pray; there is more power in prayer than in the greatest empire that this world can ever produce. He learnt that lesson. Well, we all accept it in theory! But it is the crises that prove how really, or not, we have learned. And Daniel showed his complete conviction that, whatever forces or authorities and powers there are on earth, and among men, of various kinds, the real seat of power is in the throne of heaven, and the place of power is on our knees at that throne. And when you are up against something that is satanic, only the power of God can answer it. Have you noticed that the presidents and the satraps that assembled to the king, based their whole actions on a lie; and that Darius signed that decree because of a lie! Daniel was at least one of the three presidents; if he had no greater power, he was at least one of the three. He had not proposed that decree; he had no part in it. And had Darius known the truth; had they said, We want this, but Daniel does not agree, I don't believe he would have signed it for a moment. Now, as soon as you find a lie, stand back, and say, Satan is here! Now, I am not talking about matters of opinion and judgment — we all make mistakes. But this was a matter of *fact*, and in that fact there was an untruth. Now, what do you and I do? We want to go and fight it and argue about it, and put it straight. What did Daniel do? He said, I must get to God about this; there is a trace here of something that is not just human; there is a trace here of something that no man can deal with. When he knew that that decree was signed, he knew that he was up against not presidents and satraps, but the author of all evil, the father of lies! And there is only one place where we can deal with that enemy, and that is on our knees, in the place of prayer.

Well, it was all done there. The rest was simply the divine working out. Daniel had nothing more to do; go into the lions' den, all right, if that was the Lord's will, go! Spend the night there — all right, if the Lord so wished, spend the night there! We are not told whether it was a sleepless night; we know Darius had a sleepless night! You do if you are not trusting the Lord. We rather suspect that Daniel had quite a restful one; he was in the hands of his God. He came out unhurt, unharmed, promoted, placed in authority — and why? Because he practised what he knew to be true, that the place of spiritual power is on your knees with God. If only we practised waiting on God more than we do!

May I say again, he did not go home to pray about the decree, though it is right to pray about everything. He did not go home to pray because an emergency has arisen, and something needed to be taken to God in prayer, though we should always pray in emergency. But that is not the point of the story. He prayed because he was a praying man; he prayed because God had shown him a vision, which could only be realised by prayer. "Three times a day" with the open window, he had fellowship with God, and everything was made possible because of that.

Daniel was a prophet; Jeremiah and Isaiah were prophets, and we have chapters upon chapters of their writings. But I suggest to you that the real power of their ministry came because they were men of prayer. The first prophet mentioned in the Bible is Abraham, and it is said about him, 'he is a prophet, he will pray for you!' They had to pray to get the revelation. God gave it in answer to prayer, but that was only at the beginning. I think perhaps many of us, perhaps all of us, are only at the beginning; praying for the light to come, praying for the clarity of the revelation of the will of God. But that is only the beginning of prayer. Now, there is the 'three times a day', there is the open window, there is the persistence in the face of every attempt to divert us, to threaten us, to destroy us. And if we are of the calibre of Daniel, we shall say that nothing shall move us; we will pray this thing through. At the end of the chapter it tells us, "he continued ... and he prospered ... till the reign of Cyrus the

Persian". Note that in the first chapter he came through his first testing by faith, and at the end of the chapter, it says "he lived till Cyrus". And now, almost at the end of his life, when Cyrus is near to appear, he has a deeper, a fiercer challenge, as to whether he can be moved from his fellowship with God. He triumphs; he cannot be moved; and the next thing on the divine programme is Cyrus. Well, for the people it was an earthly kingdom being recovered; it was an earthly city being rebuilt; and Daniel was the man who, through good report, and evil report, prosperity and adversity, on his knees in his prayer chamber, prayed through the purposes of God.

And here are we, perhaps nearer than we realise, to the end of the story in the spiritual realm, to the manifestation of the Kingdom of God's Son, not the earthly but this time, the heavenly, and all-glorious and eternal City of God. And Satan knows it is just round the corner; Satan knows it is at the end of the chapter. That is the reason for the dens of lions, the testings, the difficulties. And that is the reason why we must encourage one another in quiet persistence of maintained faith, to do what Daniel did, and to trust in Daniel's God.

*H. Foster*



The purpose of this publication is to encourage God's people to lay hold on eternal life, the hope set before them, knowing that Jesus Christ, their Saviour, will soon return to establish His eternal Kingdom, "so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:12).

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