

Bimonthly Encouragement to Sudanese Christian Workers

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No. 1 – March 2009. **Godly, yet in the government.**

“Without Christian involvement in politics and government, Christianity cannot influence society. God can, and often does, put godly men and women in specific political situations to effect changes”.¹

I have been reading Daniel recently.

Three times **God calls a handful of godly people to stand firm for Him.**

Every stand is a costly stand.

But because these people stand firm, God uses them to make a difference.

Daniel chapter 1:1-21.

Four godly prisoners. Men with good background but who were currently on the losing side, verses 3-4. Young men. Chosen to serve a powerful oppressor of God’s people. Yet put in that place by God, verse 2.

God had already prepared the ground on which they could make their stand, verse 9. The men decide they will honour God even down to the food they eat. Daniel leads by influencing others. They all take the risk.

They pass the doubting official’s test. Following their personal integrity God especially blesses them with wisdom and insight, verses 17-20.

These men show us that believers can serve in ungodly regimes without compromise, and with distinction.

Verse 19 “they entered the king’s service”. Actually they were serving two kings – the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar and, primarily, the kingdom of God.

Daniel chapter 3:1-30.

Three of these men, now sharing the government of Babylon, are called by God to challenge the assumptions and values of their society.

Like many today the king was concerned about his image! He wanted everyone to think well of him and bow to his greatness. He put himself equal with the many gods of polytheism.

¹ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop African Christian Ethics (Nairobi: Word Alive, Hippo Books) 2008, p.100.

Three godly men refuse to go along with the crowd, some of whom turn against them, verse 12. They are given a second chance to bow, but they use it as an opportunity to verbally witness for their Sovereign God.

They know God is able, verse 17. They are not sure if He is willing, verse 18. But they will accept death if that is His will. What happens to our bodies on earth is not the issue that matters. Our souls/spirits must stand before God!

One commentator wrote: "They would rather burn than bow to idols!"² Their faith is not a results-driven faith. (Hebrews 11:34-38). It is principle.

Their faith does not save them from the fire. God joins them and keeps them safe within the fire. The hostile king sees God at work, verse 28.

The men's faith and sacrifice was used by God to give them positions of influence in the province, verse 30. A baptism of fire!

Daniel 6:1-28.

After 60 years of public service Daniel's God-given abilities were still recognised, verse 3. So was his daily godliness, verse 5. Personal communion with God in prayer was his good practice, verses 10,11,13.

Even when human government said he must stop – Daniel would not. His first loyalty is to Almighty God. It was this loyalty that enables him to serve the country well, see verse 22, "Nor have I done anything wrong before you, O king". Daniel only ever broke an unjust decree.

The king seems to regret throwing him to the lions and certainly doubts God's ability to preserve Daniel, verse 16. But God prepared the way through for His servant, verse 22. The Creator rules His creation for His purposes.

During Daniel's lifetime kings came and kings went in his country. Only God's kingdom was eternal. Even king Darius came to see this, verses 26-27.

The four godly men I have highlighted all influenced their country and its leadership. Scripture holds them before us as great examples to follow.

In 1 Peter 2:13-17 Christians are urged to take a stand. "By doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men", verse 15.

May God help every one of us "to die to sins and live for righteousness" verse 24. Even if it costs us our lives on earth – as it did for our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ – it is a price worth paying!

Pastor Colin Salter. (Please share these thoughts with others and refer them to my website for more study resources!)

² Tokunboh Adeyemo African Bible Commentary (Nairobi: Word Alive) 2006, p.996.