

INI - SDG

Reformation Sunday

November 2, 2008

Hecla

Text: Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23 - *Now when Daniel know that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his widows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man withing thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."*

*So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed. Now the king when to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." Then the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.*

Theme: DELIVERED FROM THE LION'S MOUTH

- Daniel
- Martin Luther
- Us

Dear fellow sons and daughter of the reformation, heirs of eternal life by grace through faith that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, dear fellow redeemed,

Can you imagine yourself being faced with the choice Daniel was faced with? The ruler of the land, King Darius of the Persian Empire, had signed a decree that for the next month if someone prayed to a man or god other than the king, that person would be thrown into a den of lions? What a decision to make! Praying to my God or keeping my life! This may seem like a strange law, but the men who wanted to get rid of Daniel knew the only way was to bring a charge against him is if it was concerning the law of his God.

For Daniel it was not a difficult decision. He wanted to obey God rather than men. Rather than making a public spectacle of himself, he went to an upper room in his home, opened his window toward Jerusalem, and prayed to God three times a day as had been his custom for

many years. But more than that we read that in this very difficult time Daniel GAVE THANKS before His God. He did not complain to God about his present circumstance, but gave thanks to Him for all the blessings He had showered on Daniel.

Even though Daniel went to the privacy of his home, his enemies knew his faithfulness and the spied on Daniel waiting for him to break this new law. When they found Daniel being faithful to his God and breaking the law of King Darius, they had him right where they wanted him. They brought this to the king and reminded the king that according to the laws of the Medes and Persians this law could not be altered. Now Darius realized this law had been brought to him to try and trap his faithful governor, Daniel. Though he spent the rest of the day looking for a way to rescue Daniel, that law had been established and it's punishment must be carried out.

And so faithful Daniel was brought to the den of lions. Though we have no reason to believe that Darius was a believer in the God of the Bible, yet Darius held out hope that while he could do nothing to save Daniel, his God could. "***Your God,***" the King said, "***whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.***" With that Daniel was put in the lion's den, a stone was rolled to cover the opening to the den, and the stone was sealed - showing that this stone was not to be moved without the king's permission.

The king returned to his palace and was so disturbed by what had taken place that his usual festal evening activities were put off. He did not eat, he did not sleep, and there was no merriment for the king. It was a long, somber night for King Darius. But when morning broke the next day, the king rushed to the lion's den. In a sorrowful voice, fearing what had happened to Daniel, the king cried out, "***Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?***" To this lamenting question of the king, the voice of Daniel is heard. But it is not the voice of a dying man who had been mauled by lions, but a man who was safe and sound. A man who may well have had a better night's sleep with the lions than the king had in his comfortable palace. "***O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.***" The Triune God had delivered his faithful servant Daniel from the mouth of the lion. Just as Darius did not want to carry out this punishment on Daniel, neither did the LORD God who Himself created and controls those lions.

And so we see that the LORD God of heaven and earth delivered his faithful servant Daniel from the mouth of the lions. Let us continue with hymn 262:3.

## MARTIN LUTHER

How many of you have ever heard the name John Huss? He was a ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in the early 1400's in Europe. At this time in Europe there was really only on church - the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope was the head of that church. But the Pope not only ruled the church at that time, but he was also heavily involved with government. Princes were ordained as bishops by the Pope. A man could only be the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire if the Pope approved and installed him. In the early 1400's John Huss took a stand against some of the things which the Roman Catholic Church was doing and teaching. For instance Huss also made the Scriptural declaration that the foundation of the Christian Church is Christ and not Peter nor thus the pope. Huss was declared by the Pope to be a heretic, was excommunicated from the church in 1411, and burned alive at the stake in 1415. He was martyred for teachings that were mostly Biblical, but teachings went against the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church. John Huss is but one example of what happened to those who opposed

the Roman Catholic Church and the Papacy.

One hundred years later, about 20 years after Columbus sailed to America, a young German monk nailed a piece of paper to a church door. Though seemingly insignificant, this event would be the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation. It was October 31, 1517 and the monk's name was Martin Luther. The sheet of paper he nailed to the church door in Wittenberg contained his 95 Theses or statements against the sale of indulgences. Indulgences were pieces of paper that people could buy from the church. For buying these pieces of paper people were told that they were purchasing the forgiveness of sins. This could be for them or for a dead family member that was still suffering in purgatory. Martin Luther declared in his theses that forgiveness of sins was a free gift, earned for all by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - not something that could be purchased and sold with money.

In the years following 1517 Luther continued to study the Bible and found more and more conflicts between the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope and the Bible. Rome was teaching that salvation was something that had to be earned by good works. The Bible taught that salvation was a free gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ. Rome taught that only the Pope had the authority to forgive sins and the Pope passed on that authority through his bishops and priests. The Bible taught that any Christian can pronounce sins forgiven for Christ's sake. Luther taught and wrote of these abuses and false teachings. Finally in 1520 - nearly 3 years after posting the 95 Theses, the Pope declared that Martin Luther was excommunicated or kicked out of the church.

Then in the spring of 1521 Luther was brought before a counsel of Emperor Charles V at the city of Worms, Germany. Much like Daniel, Martin Luther had to make a choice. He was asked to take back everything he had written or face punishment. Knowing the severity of what he had been asked, Luther asked for time to think. The next day, standing before the Emperor and the Pope's representatives Luther replied: *"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen."*

Like Daniel, Luther would not and could not obey man rather than God even in the face of death. It was God that Luther served and what he believed, taught, and wrote about was based on the Word of God. The next day the Emperor declared Luther to be a heretic. The Emperor ordered that Luther and his teachings be banned from the Empire and that Luther be arrested. Furthermore anyone found giving aid and comfort to Luther could be punished just as well. However keeping his earlier promise the Emperor first granted Luther safe travel to his home in Wittenberg. Kicked out of the church and declared to be a heretic by the emperor, Martin Luther was an enemy of both the Church and the State. He could be killed by anyone at any time without fear of punishment.

On the return from Worms to Wittenberg, Luther's caravan was suddenly overrun by men with crossbows. Luther was taken from his wagon and kidnaped. However these were not enemies of Luther, but men sent by Elector Frederick - a friend and ally of Luther. They were saving Luther's life. They kidnaped Luther and hid him in the Wartburg Castle for the next year under the alias of Knight George.

The Lord would go on to use His servant Martin Luther to shine the bright light of the Gospel once again. Over the centuries men had covered the light of the Gospel by the false teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. The Lord was not done with Luther and his work. His

return to Bible-based teachings continue to be a blessing to us today - which is why we celebrate the Reformation and give thanks to God for His servant Martin Luther year. Like Daniel, we see that the Lord delivered His servant Martin Luther from the lions of the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope, and Emperor Charles the V. Let us continue with Martin Luther's mighty reformation hymn, by singing verse 4 of hymn 262.

US

We too have been delivered from the lion's mouth, haven't we? No it wasn't a den of lions that we were sealed in overnight. Nor was it being banned from the church and declared to be a heretic by the Emperor. But each one of you has been delivered from a much more powerful lion. Consider what Peter has to say about that old evil foe, the devil, who was working to destroy Daniel. The devil who was working with his Antichrist, the Papacy, to destroy Martin Luther. Peter writes to all Christians, ***Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*** (1Pt 5:8) There is a lion seeking to devour each one of your souls and that is the devil. He is on the prowl for you. The devil is seeking to draw you away from Christ and the Gospel and he will use any means necessary to accomplish this goal. He has working on his side the fear of death. He tried to use it on Daniel and Luther.

Furthermore we need to be delivered from ourselves, don't we? These bodies of ours, what do they produce? Sin! Sin which is rebellion against God. Sin which is unacceptable to a perfect holy God. Sin which separates us from God. Sin which is in us and a part of us every day of our lives. Sin which we were conceived and brought forth in. Sin which produces death. Death in this world and death eternally in the fires of hell. With Paul we cry out, ***"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"*** (Rom 7:24)

Who will deliver us from the lions' mouths of the devil, sin, and death? Can you do it? Can you shut the devil's mouth? Can you cease from sin? Can you stop and overcome death?

Well Paul continues in that passage from Romans - ***"Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*** (Rom 7:24b-25a) Just as God sent His angel to shut the lions mouth for Daniel, God has sent His Son to shut the ferocious enemies of the devil, sin, and death. By dying on the cross, the writer to the Hebrews tells us that Christ destroyed him who has power over death, that is the devil. By dying on the cross He took our sin on Himself and suffered and died in our place. While the odds seemed stacked against Daniel and Martin Luther, Jesus overcame the greatest of challenges - death itself, by rising from it.

And now through faith in Jesus we have been delivered from the lion's mouth. Our sin which separated us from God has been removed forever. Death, which we had no power over, Christ has overcome and gives that victory to each of His followers. The devil, that roaring lion, whom none of us could defeat, has been defeated forever. Just like Daniel we can say to sin, death, and the devil - ***"My God sent His SON and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me."*** In Christ Jesus death has lost it's sting. The grave has lost it's victory. God has given us the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord!

Rejoice therefore dear Christians for the living God has delivered you from the lion's mouth forever - just as He delivered Daniel and Luther! Praise be to our Triune God! Hallelujah! Amen!