TITLE: DARING TO BE A DANIEL

TEXT: Dan. 1:1-7, 6:1-6, 6:10, 3:19-29, 6:19-23,

Heb. 3:17-18

INTRODUCTION: I love to study history. That is probably why I love to read the Old Testament. It is, in essence, one big history lesson. It is a historical record of Gods people!

 History is important. It has been said that those who don’t learn from history are bound to repeat its mistakes.

 That is why I believe God has given us so rich of a historical record in scripture. So that we can learn from those who have walked this path of faith before us, learning from their successes and learning from their mistakes.

 Within the pages of Scripture we have some tremendous examples of men and women of faith who have walked this life ahead of us that we can greatly learn from.

 Some are positive examples of how to live our lives as a Christian and some negative examples that show us how not to live our lives as a Christian.

 This morning I want to look at one of the positive examples to us from scripture.

 A man that lived an exemplary life as a Child of God..

 The man is Daniel….

 Daniel grew up in a very trying time for the people of Israel.

**Dani 1:1 (NIV) In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.**

2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

**3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility--**

**4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.**

**5 The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.**

**6 Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.**

**7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.**

In my view these four young men are probably among the best examples within the pages of Scripture that exemplify just what is means to be a Christian.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced what seemed to be certain death in a fiery furnace rather than to bow down to any god other than the lord their God….

 Daniel, facing what seemed to be certain death by being thrown into a den of hungry lions rather than to bow and pay homage to any king other than the King of Kings and Lord of Lords….

 What separated these men from most of the other Israelites who fell into Babylonian captivity was that they were not just weekend warriors as far as their faith in God was concerned. But they were full time regulars.

 How many know what a weekend warrior is, where the term came from?

 It is a name given by those in regular military service to those in the reserves ….

 What the term implies is that they were just soldiers on weekends, where the enlisted man was a soldier 24 hours a day 7 days a week…

 The army reserve and National Guard has played a vital role in the history and security of our nation, going all the way back to the minute men of the revolutionary war.

 Reservist are men and women who work regular jobs but in times of crisis are called upon, to in a minutes notice, pack their bags and pick up their arms and be ready to defend their country.

 If you are regular army and you are in a fox hole under enemy fire I believe you are going to be just as grateful for the ones that are in that fox hole with you regardless of whether they are regular army or army reserve …

 But for the most part full time military would look at themselves as being better qualified and better ready for battle because they were soldiers, not just on weekends, but soldiers everyday of the week…

 As far as his faith was concerned Daniel was no weekend warrior! He was a full time regular.

 And it was evidenced by the life that he lived.

 The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar died, His son, Belshazzar became king and then he was slain and then a third king came into power over the Babylonian empire, King Darius..

**Dani 6:1 (NIV) It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom,**

**2 with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.**

(satrap was a Persian governor set over a providence)

**3 Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.**

**4 At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.**

**5 Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."**

 What a testimony for a believer from the perspective of this world!

 They tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct --- but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

Finally they said, **"We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."**

 Those who felt threatened by Daniel’s favor with the king could not find anything in the character of Daniel to bring a charge against him!

 He was a godly man that walked the talk! He lived the life that a child of God has been called to live!

 Daniel lived such an exemplary life, such a godly life, that they knew that they would never catch Daniel doing anything whereby they could bring a bad accusation against him…

 So the say to themselves…

**We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."**

So they conspire and go to king Darius and trick him into making a decree that says that everyone must not bow to any god or any man for the next thirty days other than King Darius or they will be put to death.

 This suggestion tickles the kings ear, speaks to his pride so he makes the decree……

 The conspirators had been watching Daniel for a long time… They knew his habits! They knew his daily practices and they knew that he would never bow down to any god but the Lord his God!

Dani 6:10 (NKJV) Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows 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.

 This is not the action of a weekend warrior!

This is the action of a full time regular!

 Again, our country is very dependent on the weekend warriors! The army reservist, the minutemen of our day!

 They fill a very vital role in the protection of our country and the might of our nation. We need to be as proud of them as any other person who serves our country through military service..

 But what we need to understand is that there are no weekend warriors of the faith!

 When we sign up with God we sign up for full time service!

 We are all to be regulars, full time soldiers in Gods army!

 Yet how many of us act as though we are just a weekend warrior for God?

 And then only half of the weekend!

 We go to Church on Sunday but often seem to forget about God Monday through Saturday?

EXAMPLE: A young man was being interviewed for a position in a small business firm. He had a neat appearance and made a good impression on the owner of the company. He had also prepared an excellent resume in which he listed his pastor, his Sunday school teacher and a Church elder as references…

 The owner of the business studied the resume for several minutes and then said:

 “I appreciate these recommendations from your Church friends…But I would really like to hear from someone who knows you on weekdays”.

 I think that the real test of our faith is not found in what our brothers and sisters in Christ, the people that we see in Church say about us, but it is what the world has to say about us! What do those we work with have to say about us? What does the cashier at the local supermarket have to say about us? What does our husband or wife or children have to say about us?

 If we are walking the talk, living the life that God has called us to live then what our church family has to say about us will be pretty much the same as what everyone else whom we have contact throughout the week will have to say about us.

 The true test of living a Christ like life is not found in what our friends have to say about us as much as in what our enemies may have to say about us……

 Even Daniel’s enemies couldn’t come up with anything in which they could bring a legitimate accusation against Him.

 Their evil plan only worked because of Daniel’s proven character and life. Because Daniel just didn’t talk the talk as a child of God, just look good when he was in the synagogue or around other believers, but Daniel walked the talk as a Child of God 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

 What did Daniel’s life of dedication and devotion to God get him?

 Well, for one thing, thrown into a den of hungry lions!

What did Daniel’s three young Hebrew friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s life of dedication and devotion to God get them? For one thing, thrown into a fiery furnace!

 Yet even though these great men of the faith suffered great adversity and trial and tribulation because of their faith, God delivered them from the hands of them all…

 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego wouldn’t bow down before an image of king Nebuchadnezzar, and because they wouldn’t bow down or serve any god but thee God of creation, they were thrown into a fiery furnace to be burned alive…

 How did God repay a life of dedication and service?

**Dani 3: 19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, ---He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.**

**20 And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who [were] in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, [and] cast [them] into the burning fiery furnace.**

**21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their [other] garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.**

**22 Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.**

**23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.**

**24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste [and] spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."**

**25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."**

**26 Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace [and] spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come [here]." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire.**

**27 And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.**

**28 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!**

**29 "Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this."**

God delivered them with a mighty deliverance!

Daniel wouldn’t forsake his God and bow down before King Darius and was thrown into a den of hungry lions..

After a sleepless night of anxiety when King Darius goes to open the door to the lion’s den what does he find?

**Dani 6:19 (NKJV) Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.**

**20 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?"**

 Notice again the life of commitment and dedication to God that Daniel lived that is evidenced by what the King said of him…

**“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?"**

What a testimony! To have someone say of you,

 “Servant of the living God—whom you serve continually!

**21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever!**

**22 "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."**

**23 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.**

What a statement of promise! What a statement of provision!

 And it is just as true for us today as it was for Daniel then!

And.. **No injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.**

 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out from the fiery furnace with not even a hair singed! They didn’t even have the smell of smoke upon them!

 Daniel came out from a den of hungry lions without a scratch on his body!

 Why? How? Because they lived their lives as a full time regular in the army of God!

 They lived lives of dedication and trust and total reliance upon their God!

 Folks this same promise is true for us today as we live lives of dedication to God.

 As we sign up as a regular in the army of God.

 Our service to the Lord, a life of dedication to the Lord, may lead us into battles at times, we may face trial and tribulation because of our stand for Christ, but the one that we serve is able! He is able to deliver us from all of our trials.

 And even if there are trials that we must endure He is still able, His grace is always sufficient!

 His strength is always enough to get us through whatever it is that we may have to face in this life!

**Hebr 7:24 (NIV) but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.**

**25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.**

All the great heroes of the faith that encompass the great cloud of witnesses in Heb. 11 that we so often look up to and admire and desire to be like have one thing in common. One thing that ties them all together and makes them a part of this great, ever-growing cloud of witnesses of Jesus Christ…..

 And that is they all were regulars in the army of God! They all signed up for full-time service! They were not weekend warriors, those who just limited there worship and walk with God to one or two days a week, but they worshiped and walked with God 24-7!

 They were all men and women who dared to be a Daniel in the world in which they lived! Dared to live a life of total and complete commitment to Christ!

 This morning, how would you describe your relationship with God? More importantly, how would others describe your relationship with God?

 In the world in which we live are we seen as a weekend warrior or a full time regular for Christ?

 Do we have the faith; are we living the life of a Daniel or a Shadrach, Meshach or Abednego?

 A life of commitment and reliance upon the lord our God whereby we will have the confidence and courage to say to the kings of this world, as these young Hebrew men of faith said to the kings of their world…

Even If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.

 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

This is the statement of a full time regular, the statement of a life that is totally committed and dedicated to the Lord…

 Is this the statement of your life this morning to the world in which you live? That even though you may face the fiery furnaces or the lions dens of this life at times you can say…

The God I serve is able to save me, and he will rescue me from your hand…

18 But even if he does not, I want you to know… that I will not serve your gods or worship any god other then the Lord my God!

Will we dare to be a Daniel in the world that we live today?