

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON FOR JULY 23, 1922

BY REV. M. F. HODGES

Subject—"Daniel and the Lions."
—Daniel 6: 1-28.

Golden Text—Who through Faith subdued Kingdoms, Promised Righteousness, Obtained Promises, Stopped the Mouth of Lions—Heb. 11: 33.

Time—About 538 B. C.

Place—Babylon.

God still has His eye on His servant Daniel. Darius is now king and has placed over the affairs of his kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, with Daniel as their chief. Daniel was chosen for this important position because of his common sense, executive ability and statesmanship. Because Daniel was faithful to his God and to the office to which he was chosen, this bunch of dishonest princes set about at once to get him out of their way. Daniel was one honest man in office and by his honesty he foiled their plans, doubtless for graft in the office to which they had been chosen.

These princes were to look after the temporal affairs of the kingdom, to see that there were no thefts and shortage in the accounts but that things should go well and be no loss to the king. These princes tried to find something wrong with Daniel's accounts. They scrutinized very closely every move Daniel made in their efforts to find something whereof to accuse him before the king, they found none however. Daniel kept his books so that the auditor might have access to them at any time and find them O. K. "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. If there is any such thing as inspiration coming from the devil, the one who made this statement certainly caught his inspiration from him. They concoct a clever scheme to get Daniel out of their way. Here is shown the weakness of this old king, now sixty two years old, old enough to have had better sense than to be picked up by this scheme perpetrated by the devil. Like all the kings about whom we have studied for some time his head was turned by pride and ambition and he became a fool. They come at him by way of suggestion, like the devil often does, and suggest that he make a decree that no one shall pray for thirty days to any god save to the king. Darius was so flattered and the suggestion pleased him so well in his self-pride that he yielded and made and signed the decree. They had already found the secret of Daniel's victories: It was his place of prayer.

When the devil can get the professed Christian to desert his hour of prayer he is sure to gain the victory. Daniel might die but they could not cut off the line of communication between him and the God of heaven. These enemies of Daniel find him in his room with his windows open toward the place he loved, Jerusalem, praying three times a day as he had done in the days gone by. From every conceivable vantage point they had watched him to see what effect the king's decree would have on Daniel. Darius received their report that Daniel is still praying to his God and thereupon becomes distressed with himself because of the decree which he has signed, sets about to release Daniel from his fate but to no avail. Daniel is ordered according to the decree to be cast into the den of lions, the command is obeyed.

Daniel has lived too long in company with his God to be disturbed over a few lions. Darius stands and looks for what he considers the last time, into the face of this old saint and bids him goodbye before he is thrown into the den of lions. His parting message to Daniel was: "Thy God whom thou serveest continually, He will deliver thee." He is now in the den, the king's seal and that of the princes are placed on the great stone at its mouth. To those on the outside it looked like the old prophet was gone for good. Wait a moment: they had forgotten to reckon with Daniel's God. This is one time the lions missed their meal. Any single one of the guardian angels would have coveted the honor to spend the night in the den of lions while old Daniel slept with a lion for his pillow. Darius spends a sleepless night. Allows no music to be made for him and no food to be brought. Early next morning he hastens to see about Daniel. He approaches the den with these words: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou serveest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Listen to the answer of Daniel to the king's question: "O king, live forever, My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me: and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

The king is overjoyed and has Daniel taken from the pit. Here the scene changes. Those who tried to have Daniel gotten out of the way

are ordered brought and cast into the den of lions, with their wives and children. "Be not delivered, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap". They expected the lions to feast on Daniel for supper, but not so, they are hungry now and these enemies of God and accusers of his servant make the lions a splendid meal after a night of fasting. These princes and their families are gone. Daniel, the old white locked saint stands there conqueror through him that loved him. Haman built a scaffold to hang Mordecai on and was hanged thereon himself. God commanded the Jews to destroy the Canaanites root and branch. The God of Daniel still lives and is able to rescue his servants from the mouth of any lion. He is still running this old world in the interest of the kingdom of his only Son, Jesus Christ. The king issues another decree quite different from the first, here it is: "The king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom that shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of lions." We can only as we study these two characters hope that the faith of Darius in the God of Daniel took hold enough to save him and that they are forever blessed together in his presence.

Practical lessons: 1. Part of the excellent spirit found in Daniel was his deep humility. The strength of every man is his humility. 2. In possessing this excellent spirit there was a kindly feeling for those about him. 3. In that excellent spirit there was found a great deal of common sense. Religion is common sense and the person dealing most with the things of the unseen world will know best how to deal with the common place things of life. 4. The only thing the enemies of Daniel could bring against him was that he prayed too much. One of the things brought against professors of religion today is they pray too little. 5. It was no new thing for Daniel to pray. It was his habit to pray. He had not just begun to pray when he faced the den of lions. He prayed "as he did aforetime." Daniel left Jerusalem in captivity when but a boy, yet, he had not forgotten the place near and dear to every Jew, that place was the temple. Many folks seemed to have outgrown the church, need no longer its influence and have forgotten its sacred altars. Every stone in the structure of Daniel's stalwart life was made of prayer. 6. The preacher who stands for God and declares the truth, though it hurts those who hear and the lions roar against him, he may be assured that they can not hurt him. "Lo I am with you always."

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The Getaway of Big Bill

By AUSTIN FLEET

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Big Bill was not the man to shrink from facing the music, but to die for a murder committed by that little rat Giovanni was an impossible position to be placed in.

He had been framed, and he had never had a chance to put the guilt where it belonged. He had been miles away from the scene of old Merriman's murder.

Kate Hands had framed him. But Kate had religion—sometimes. If Kate confessed—that was his only chance, as he lay on his cot in the condemned cell and saw man after man of his predecessors start for the death chamber with a wave of the hand and a cheery good-bye to his fellows in the adjacent cells.

He had told Father Lucas about Kate. Father Lucas had not believed him. Yet he could have extracted a confession from the perjured woman. Father Lucas regarded Big Bill as an impenitent sinner. Big Bill hated him.

That was why he had no compunctions about what he had planned. He had been a refractory prisoner, and, as a condemned man, he had been humored. If Big Bill chose to spend all his days huddled up in his blankets, the warden was not going to hale him forth, with two days before the execution.

Big Bill was waiting for Father Lucas at dead of night. He had told the warden he wanted to confess something—something important and urgent. Big Bill knew Father Lucas would come.

The guard unlocked his cell, strode to his bed, and touched him on the shoulder. "Father Lucas is here, Bill," he said.

A moment later the black-robed figure of the priest entered the cell. The cell door clicked. Big Bill got up.

"You wanted to see me?" asked Father Lucas.

Bill maneuvered round him. "Yes, father," he answered, and the blow that followed went home, to just the place Bill had tapped so often in the prize ring. Father Lucas dropped unconscious across the bed.

In an incredibly short time Big Bill had stripped off Father Lucas's black gown and arrayed himself in it. He drew the blankets about the unconscious form. He took the Father's crucifix. He waited.

Would Father Lucas recover consciousness before the guard looked in? Those moments were agony. And the unconscious man was already beginning to stir. Then, to his intense relief, Bill heard the guard's step outside, and tapped on the door.

"You're through early, Father," the guard began; and, at the sight of Bill's face he started. The next instant a staggering blow had stretched him prone on the cell floor, and Big Bill had the keys and had locked him in.

Bill's cries meant little to him—for a few moments, anyway. Occasionally a Southern prisoner, Italian or Sicilian, lost his head. Hysterical outbreaks were not so rare that the guards would come rushing to the spot. Big Bill walked steadily along the dimly lit corridor.

A guard came hurrying along. Big Bill averted his face. The guard passed without noticing him. Father Lucas was a familiar figure in the penitentiary.

Bill walked into the warden's office. The warden, seated inside, did not even glance up as the black-robed figure passed. Bill reached the gate of the prison. It was now or never. A guard stood on duty there, with his loaded rifle. Big Bill had never seen his face—as a matter of fact, the man attended the short-term part of the penitentiary. If he did not know the man, it was probable that the man would take him for an assistant confessor.

He looked at him. "Going out, Father?" he asked. "Your pass, please."

Big Bill was nonplussed only for an instant. Then he put his hand into his gown and pulled out a paper. The guard looked at it in a puzzled way.

He was still barring the gate. At that instant Big Bill heard shouts behind him. Men came running—the imprisoned guard, the warden and, behind them, the figure of Father Lucas.

He leaped at the sentry, grasped him around the neck, and struggled for the key. Next instant he was borne down under a heap of men. He ceased to struggle.

"You fool!" It was the warden speaking. He was waving the paper that Big Bill had taken from the priest's gown. "Read, if you've got eyes in your head, Bill!"

Big Bill read with incredulity. He turned his pleading eyes on Father Lucas.

"Kate has confessed to me," said Father Lucas. "Giovanni has been arrested. You—may be free. But—I've got a better punch than yours, Bill, and if you do get out I'm going to teach it to you."

Ancient and Modern Rings.
The main difference between ancient and modern rings is in the use of jewels. Early rings were merely made of the materials; the hoop was heavy and ornamented. Later the stones began to be used, set in the material, but merely as an additional ornament to the gold. Then the precious stone became more and more important, until nowadays the setting is subordinated to the stone.

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE

Having this day qualified as Administrator of the estate of Frank Barnes, late of Hertford County, this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned, on or before the 11th day of July, 1923, or this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment. This July 11th, 1922.

J. R. GARRETT, Administrator.
7-14-6t. Frank Barnes, Deceased.

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