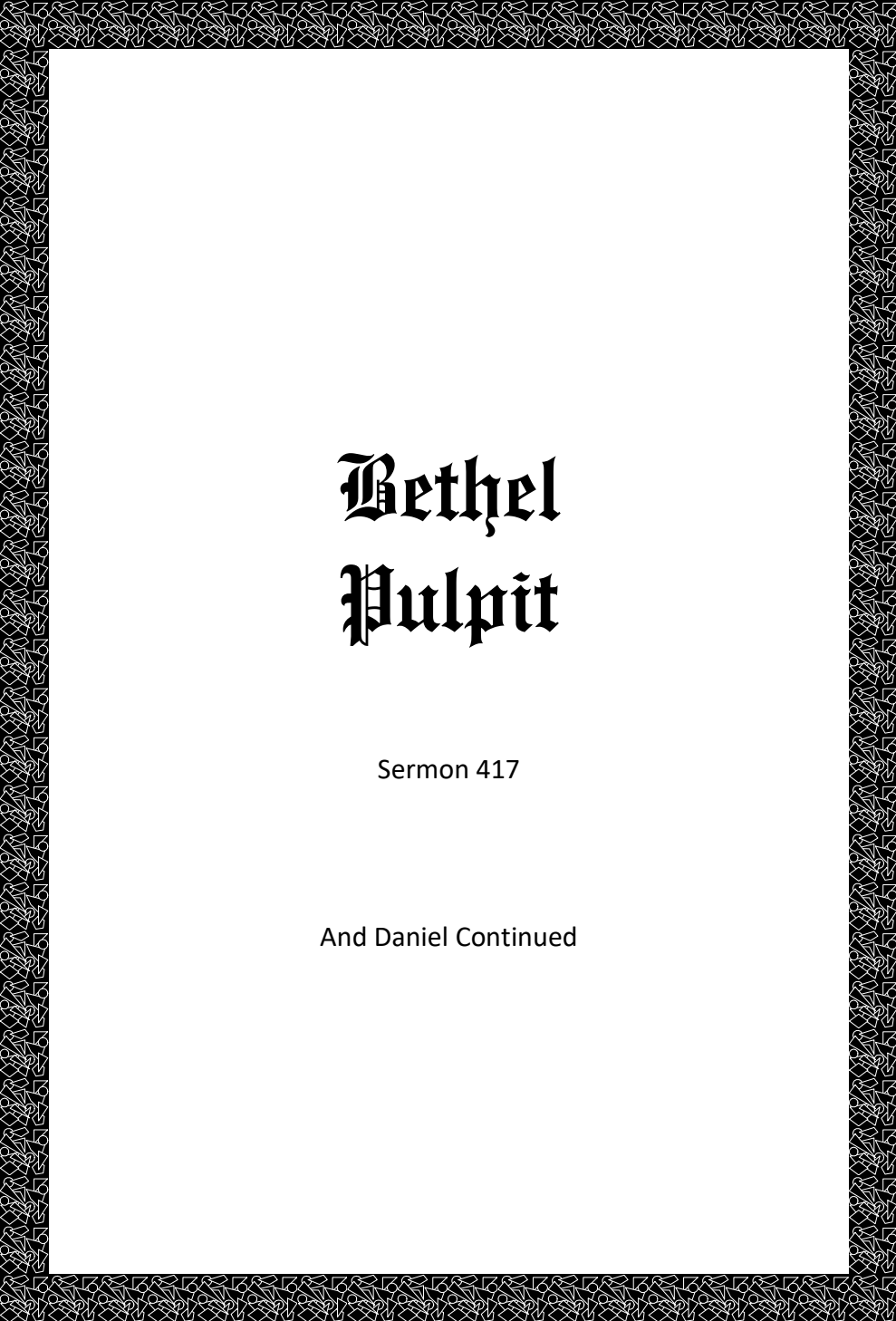




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 417

And Daniel Continued

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 17th November, 2019**

Text: “*And Daniel continued*” (Daniel 1. 21).

If there is to be a *continuing*, a going on, well, there must be a *beginning*. In this chapter we read of Daniel's beginning, and then in the rest of the book, which covers a long period over seventy years, it tells how he continued, faithful to his God, upheld by his God, right to the end.

So in this chapter, we are thinking about Daniel's beginnings, and so at the start this morning, I do want to talk especially to our younger people and children. So listen carefully. When these things were happening in the life of Daniel, it has been assessed that he was about fourteen years old. He was only a boy, and he had had a most cruel uprooting. He lived in Jerusalem, and the whole city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's invading army, and many were taken into captivity those hundreds of miles away to Babylon. As soon as they reached Babylon, the king had a policy. Those boys who seemed to be intelligent, those boys who were handsome, were set apart and they were trained. I think the word we would use today is *indoctrinated*. They had to have the whole of their Jewish religion knocked out of them, and be made idolaters.

As soon as Daniel reached Babylon, he would not have known anyone there. It seems he had been taken away from his parents. What was he going to do? Why I am speaking to you young people: if you were only fourteen – some of you are – and you were snatched away from your home, taken to a far-off country, and they were treating you kindly and they were making you into a little heathen, and you had to forget you had ever been to a Strict Baptist chapel, how would you go on? It is a big question. Does it frighten you? I remember Mr. Frank Gosden speaking on one occasion, and he said this: “I have often wondered, if I was transported away from England and had to live alone in the middle of the Sahara Desert, how much religion I would have left; whether I would have any religion at all.”

Immediately Daniel was put to the test. It is very difficult for us to see what the problem was. It only seemed to be a small problem, but Daniel felt it was offending his God, and he would not give in on that little

thing. What was it? The king commanded that they should be fed with the finest of food and the best of wine, and Daniel refused. Why it was, is not made completely clear – whether on the one hand he thought it was against the Jewish law he had been brought up under, or whether he feared that this food had first of all been offered to idols – but he would not give in. The person in charge said, If you do not do it, I am liable to lose my head. The king will not be pleased. Daniel asked for ten days to see how they got on. He agreed he should have nothing to eat but pulse. It does not sound very inviting, pulse. It was some kind of salad, something like lettuce. You think, if that was all he was going to eat for three years! At the end of the trial period, he and his three friends who agreed with him were found to be more healthy than any of the others who had been fed on the king's best.

Daniel began how he felt he must continue. He continued seventy years, but there had to be a beginning, and I am sure some of you have it at school, or some of you older ones, if you go out to work, or you are in training, or you have to share a room with someone. Now there is a reason given. Daniel, as soon as he arrived, he "*purposed in his heart,*" which means this: he had got something in his heart, not just in his head. Whilst he had been in Jerusalem, the Lord had graciously put something in his heart. He could not deny it. And if the Lord puts something in your heart, it will be there for ever. That is the secret of all these seventy years after. That is the secret of Daniel continuing. He had something in his heart. I do not know how many fourteen-year-olds we have here today. How many of you have got *something in your heart* that the Lord has put there? It was not just a bit of natural bravery. It was not just Daniel thinking he must do his duty. The Lord had put something in his heart. It was grace He put in his heart, and "grace once received can ne'er be lost." But it will be tried. You young ones who have openly professed the Lord's name, you may have seventy years, like Daniel, seventy years as church members. I could not get away from this verse:

"Lord, help us on Thy grace to stand" – there is no other way we can.

"Lord, help us on Thy grace to stand,
And every trial firm endure;
Supported by Thy sovereign hand,
And by Thy oath and covenant sure."

“Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat.” Well, the trial was only going to be for ten days at first. I am sure that most of us – and I am thinking of myself – could have thought of many excuses, many a way out, but Daniel did not. He had something in his heart. As my congregation, that is what matters as we grow older – and some of you have your trials – and eternity before us: to have something in your heart. It is spoken of like this: the new birth. It is spoken of like this: true Holy Spirit conversion. And the holy fear of God will be put in your heart, and there will be a complete change with you, and when the fear of the Lord is put in your heart, there will be things you once did and you never dare do them again. Do you know something of that? That is what real repentance is; not just talking or even weeping. There are things you would love to do; perhaps they were idols to you; perhaps you felt you could never give them up.

But the fear of the Lord – it is a principle. You will be brought to feel your need of a Saviour. You must have Him; you cannot do without Him. That Holy Spirit who has put something in your heart, He will reveal the Saviour to you. It will make Him attractive: “The King in His beauty”; that great salvation, those terrible sufferings He endured, that great atonement He made, that precious blood He shed that cleanses from all sin. With that plea in your heart, you will be after it; you must have it; you cannot live without it. It is, “Give me Christ, or else I die.”

“Daniel purposed in his heart.” But then you think of us with all our favours, the clear light of the gospel. Daniel only saw these things dimly, afar off, shadows of them, the ceremonial law. But those Old Testament saints, many of them had a good religion. Turning from Daniel, thinking of old Jacob, he saw God face to face, and his life was preserved. How many of us in gospel days, so favoured, have seen God face to face?

It only seemed a small matter on which Daniel was standing. Now just lingering here a moment. I have often thought of our godly martyrs, and one sad thing today is that our young people are not brought up, as we once were, realising that our godly martyrs in England suffered. Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* – how many of you know it? We were brought up on it. We were schooled in it. We knew all about the sufferings they endured and what they were willing to endure. It was said at one time there was hardly a house in England that did not have Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* there, along with the Bible. That cruel Queen Mary had two-hundred-and-

eighty-two people burnt to death for the truth's sake. Like Daniel, they purposed in their heart, because they had something in their heart.

I have read those accounts and pondered over them, and with some of them, it seemed to be over such a small thing, just a tiny detail concerning the Lord's supper. They were cajoled by priests and bishops and promised all kinds of things, but would not give up. One or two of them were poor boys, young girls, aged women hobbling along on their crutches to the fire to be put to death, poor, lame men – the wonderful witness of them. You read the accounts – just some little detail, just to change one little word about what they believed about the Lord's supper; but they would not. O the grace that was in them! It would be nice if today more was known about the sufferings of our martyrs; and also often we were brought up on the Huguenots and their sufferings, and also the Covenanters in Scotland and their sufferings. But there were a lot of Daniels amongst them.

“Daniel purposed in his heart.” The wonderful thing was this: that the Lord honoured him. If there is one principle that was proved by Daniel, it was this: “Them that honour Me I will honour.” Of course, it is not this with most of the Lord's people, but he was brought into honour and into eminence even with three mighty kings. There was Nebuchadnezzar first of all, and then there was Belshazzar, and then there was Darius, and the Lord gave him wisdom to stand. There were different situations. We sing, “Through life and all its changing scenes.” The changing scenes that Daniel knew, and yet he continued.

It is a great point in real religion, this continuing. There is the exhortation in Scripture: “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learnt.” There are the examples. I often think of that beautiful word our Lord Jesus spoke to His immediate disciples. It was at a time when they were not at their best. They knew He was about to suffer, and they were asking which of them was to be the greatest. Yet the Lord Jesus, forgiving their sins, their faults, said this: “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.” When so many forsook Him and persecuted Him, He was touched with the loyalty of His immediate disciples. Loyalty is a wonderful thing in the church of God, to remain loyal, especially to the truth, and then to remain loyal to the people of God.

The Lord Jesus said, “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.” Well, they were with Him in His temptations, and if you and I are to continue to the end, it will be through temptations, because from the moment the Lord puts that principle in your heart, the devil is after you. He did not bother you much before. Could I say something to those of you who know and love and fear the Lord? Did you find my experience? Before I was interested in spiritual things, I had no doubt about any of the doctrines – of predestination and election. I believed them all. As soon as the Lord began to touch my heart, I began to wonder if this was right and that was wrong. It is the devil. He does not tempt his own. He leaves them alone.

O but it is a wonderful thing if when we come to the end, the Lord speaks this to us: “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.” There is a secret there: “*with Me*” – with Christ. We shall never continue, we shall never endure to the end without Him. But, “Ye are they which have continued with Me.” It could have been said to Daniel. Do you know what the Lord said to him at the end? It is a beautiful word: “O Daniel ... greatly beloved.” To have the sweet assurance, not just being loved of our God, but being *greatly beloved*. We do not deserve it. We do not deserve any of these things. They are all of God’s grace. “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me.” The word is *bequeathed*. It was the Lord’s loving, dying bequest to His poor, unworthy disciples, all of mercy, all of grace. You do not deserve a bequest. “I *bequeath* unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath *bequeathed* unto Me.”

“Daniel purposed in his heart.” It was there, and it was there for ever. “And Daniel continued.” The sad thing is that there are many who do not continue. We have known them, and sometimes we have loved them, and we have accepted them, but where are they today? In the Word of God there are so many warnings. They are set up like a beacon light, whether you think of it like a beacon light out in the sea to keep the boats from crashing on the rocks, or whether you think of a light on top of a cliff.

O but these warnings! “He that endureth to the end shall be saved.” You know what the doctrinal professor says. He says, “Once in Him, in Him for ever.” Well, we give that man a point. It *is*, “Once in Him, in Him for ever.” Those with something in their heart *will* endure to

the end, but the only proof they are right, that they do have something in their heart, is that they *do* endure to the end. What about Judas Iscariot? He did not endure to the end. You can think of Ananias and Sapphira. You can think of Demas. You can think of Lot's wife. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." We all need to be kept.

If ever there was a godly man, it was our William Gadsby. It was not just he was a good preacher; he was a most godly man. If you read his life, you would be touched with the godliness and grace, the tenderness in his heart. But the last few months of his life, he was full of fear and trembling. He said, "Everyone knows me. What if I am left in the pulpit to say something wrong, or if there is some slip in my conduct to dishonour my Lord?"

"He that endureth to the end." Daniel did endure to the end. Don't you like a word like this: "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"? It is like the dear old man who died recently in Bethesda, and if ever you asked him how he was, he said, "Upheld, upheld." That is it:

"Upheld by Jehovah's omnipotent hand,
The righteous shall hold on his way."

So there are twelve chapters to the Book of Daniel. This is just chapter 1, the beginning. There was that time when Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. He was going to slay all the Chaldeans and soothsayers. He was going to slay Daniel in the midst of them. The Lord appeared and showed Daniel how to deal with it, and the Lord helped him. We often think of Daniel in the lions' den being delivered. It was deliverance all along. Right from the beginning he was delivered from the fear of man, delivered from self, delivered from unbelief. So it was all through the life of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was a dreadful despot. He took something in his mind and it was death and destruction for them.

"And Daniel continued." There was that time when Nebuchadnezzar had that vision of a great image, the top gold, and then silver, and then brass, and then iron, and then iron mixed with clay. Daniel was given wisdom to explain it. Wasn't he faithful, and mustn't it have been difficult! He had to tell the king that this great image which was cut down, was him, and he was going to be changed like a beast of the field. He was going to behave like an animal. His hair was going to grow; his

nails were going to be like claws. He was going to go about on all fours, eating grass. Daniel was to tell Nebuchadnezzar all this, and he told him. You wonder if you and I would have watered it down a bit.

But one thing you notice with Daniel. When he had to stand for the truth right at the beginning, he was very polite, and extremely courteous. That may be a help to some of you girls and boys when you have to stand, perhaps with a teacher, that you are enabled to do it quietly and courteously, especially if you know you have a principle within, especially if you know you have God on your side.

It continued all through the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. It seems that many believe that Daniel witnessed, following the Lord's blessing of his word, a true, Holy Ghost conversion of that ungodly Nebuchadnezzar, because his testimony was one of the clearest testimonies in all Scripture to the greatness of God. I have often thought, though Nebuchadnezzar spoke it, it was the language, the spirit, the belief of Daniel. What did Nebuchadnezzar say of God? "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" That was the secret.

Now there is this side to it, the great question, how could Daniel stand, how could Daniel continue, in such appalling circumstances? Well, if you think of it from Daniel's side, we read again and again that Daniel prayed. In Daniel's life of faith, prayer was the secret, casting himself completely on the Lord, looking to the Lord alone for help, knowing that complete, utter dependence, reliance on Him. But then the other side: it was because of divine, almighty power, because God was Daniel's God, that he stood, that he endured.

Then you come to the reign of Belshazzar. You all know it – this drunken orgy of a thousand of his lords. And there they were, drinking and defiling the sacred vessels from the temple, and then that hand writing on the wall, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN": "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Daniel was asked to appear before the king, because the queen reminded him that he had the ability to interpret dreams. Daniel always said it was not in him, but in the Lord. But have you ever thought: Daniel interpreted that dream that the kingdom of Belshazzar was finished? That very night he was slain in battle.

But the faithfulness of Daniel! He not only told him this sad news, but he rebuked him. He told him all these wonderful happenings in the reign of his father. He said that Belshazzar had witnessed all these things. He said this to him: “The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.” He openly rebuked the mighty king who could have slain him on the spot. Just pausing there, that word was spoken to a heathen king. How much more do you and I in Bethel Chapel this morning need it! “God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.” We have not as we ought.

But we hastily pass on to Darius being king, the well-known story, Daniel in the lions’ den. Do not forget, Daniel is not now that fourteen-year-old boy. He is an old man. But that principle of grace is still standing as much when he is an old man as it did in the beginning. There is a point here for old people as well as young. How easy it is when a man gets old, the things he has tried to stand firm on for all those many years – is it too much trouble still to keep standing, no compromise on the truth, no giving way, as the Lord helps, as the Lord upholds?

You do not need me to tell you the story of Daniel. You all know about Daniel in the lions’ den. I just remind you of two things: they were real lions, not fairy-tale lions, and secondly, we know the end of the story; Daniel did not. When Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den, he did not know the end of the story. If anyone prayed to any other God but Darius, he would be thrown into the lions’ den. It was signed and sealed, “according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” We read this: Daniel opened his windows and prayed “*as he did aforetime.*” There seems a lot to me in those little words, “as he did aforetime.” Whatever was happening, whether he was being exalted or the opposite, he was enabled to go on “as he did aforetime.” He could have sung that hymn that we sang just now:

“I’m not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause.”

“Daniel,” said the king, “Is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee?” Is He? Now Daniel knew the answer. He had proved it all those many years. He proved it again and again. Perhaps this was outwardly the greatest trial of his life, but he believed the Lord could deliver him and would deliver him. He opened his windows three times a

day toward Jerusalem. You know what general religion would say: You are going a little bit too far, Daniel. You are just a little bit too strict. You could keep your windows shut. You could pray in your room so that nobody knows.

Daniel opened his windows three times a day toward Jerusalem. That was not superstition. It was many years since Daniel had lived in Jerusalem, but he had not forgotten the temple there. There was the high priest there. There was the sacrifice. There was blood shed. There was atonement made. There was a mediator. And Daniel knew more than just empty, formal things. Daniel knew all these were pointing to some glorious Man who was true, almighty God, who would one day come. That was Daniel. He had not forgotten Jerusalem. He had not forgotten what he learned in his youth, and was not ashamed to open his windows toward Jerusalem. He honoured his God and his God honoured him. Doesn't the case of Daniel put us to shame!

There is a question for you young ones. The Lord was speaking to Ezekiel on one occasion (Ezekiel 14. 14), and he said things were so wicked among God's people that if there were three men praying for them, the Lord still would not hear them. Almighty God chose out three of the most godly men in the Old Testament. Now who were they? Daniel was one of them; the other two (Noah and Job) were dead. But Daniel was still alive when the Lord chose him out as an example of three godly men.

"Is thy God able?" He said, "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths." Daniel knew a delivering God. "And Daniel continued," right to the very end.

I just leave this interesting, important subject with that most beautiful word that closes the whole Book of Daniel – chapter 12, the last verse, God's final word. You might say, just like David dismissed Barzillai with a kiss (2 Samuel 19. 39), that is just how Almighty God dismissed His servant Daniel. "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." When the Lord put that principle into Daniel's heart, He gave him a lot to stand in, and he stood in it over seventy years, and that was the Lord's final word. "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved." "Thou shalt ... stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

* * *

I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause,
Maintain the honour of His Word,
The glory of His cross.

Jesus, my God, I know His name,
His name is all my trust;
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost.

Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I've committed to His hands,
Till the decisive hour.

Then will He own my worthless name
Before His Father's face,
And in the new Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place.

I. Watts