

TITLE

Open Windows

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"OPEN WINDOWS"
"...and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed..." Daniel 6:10b.

"In the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood, astray,
Gone from the path direct!"
Dante, in these opening lines of the "Inferno", has expressed the plight of many a soul. We have been travelling on a road that has lost itself in a forest. Our path has gradually faded, so gradually that we were not aware that it had faded and now we find ourselves standing amid strange and unfamiliar surroundings. We no longer can find any path. We have no idea where we are. The trees are so thick that the sun is shut out. We are lost.

This experience is very very common and comes not only to young people but to older people as well. Doubt, disappointment, discouragement, failure, disillusionment combine to make us feel that we are lost in a gloomy wood.

The story of Daniel is an attempt to give a religious answer to this problem.

Daniel appears to have been written in the days of the bitter persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, who reigned from 175 to 164 B. C. In his efforts to compel the faithful in Jerusalem to abandon their practice of the Mosaic precepts and their worship at the Temple, he partially destroyed the city, defiled the sanctuary, and rendered the maintenance of service impossible until it was cleansed. Many Jews gave up their religion and apostatized to the pagan religion of the king. The Maccabean movement was a patriotic effort to save the national faith. Another effort was made by the author or authors of the book of Daniel. It was their endeavor to keep their fellow Jews loyal to the traditions of their fathers, even at the cost of martyrdom. They believed first that within a brief time (understood to often as three years and a half) the trouble would be over, the tyrant dead, and the happy age of deliverance and triumph for the Jewish people would come. In setting forth this hope and making this appeal, they employed the remarkable figure of Daniel, a Jew of ancient days, either the Babylonian exile or the still earlier Assyrian deportation of the ten tribes.... The principal idea of the book is the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God, "Washington Community".

This is essentially our difficulty. The Jews felt that they were lost because of persecution. Their religious certainty was destroyed.

Religion had been the very basis of their life so when the old religious basis was taken away they were left without any guiding principles. Today there are many subtle forces that are bringing about in our lives the same crisis that Antiochus brought about in the lives of those people.

The writer of the Book of Daniel tries to show the people the way out. He does this by telling them a story of a brilliant Jew who had been given a position of trust by the great king Darius.

"Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall read a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore King Darius signed the writing and the decree. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Daniel 6:1-28

Evidently this exceedingly malicious attempt to harm him did not bother Daniel in the least. His faith was not shaken; his life was not disturbed; he did not pine and say

"In the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood, astray,
Gone from the path direct!"

What was there in the life of this man that kept him serene when others were disturbed? We are told that he was preferred above all others "because an excellent spirit was in him. How did he come to have that spirit? My answer is that Daniel was different from other men and achieve his victory in life because he kept his windows open toward Jerusalem.

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Rufus Jones says, "The solution of all our troubles and problems is, I maintain, to be found in the recovery of more vital methods of living communion with God." Very few of us would quarrel with that statement. We recognize this need. We know that our lives are more satisfying when we are able to experience this communion with God. With Augustine we cry out, "For Thou makest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee." While there are many who do not recognize this need of God the majority of those of us who are here this morning do recognize it. I take your presence here as a sign that you want to have more vital methods of living communion with God. Our difficulty is not that we do not want God, but rather that we cannot find Him. Show us the father and that will satisfy us. Our need is some method by means of which we can find Him. One man found the way, "...and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed..."

I doubt very much if you will ever find God anywhere until you have found his somewhere. Our greatest revelation of the Infinite has been in the Finite. Manikd was able to understand God when it saw him in Jesus. It is so in our own lives. We must first localize God even as Daniel did by having our windows open toward Jerusalem. Daniel teaches us to do two things. First we should have a particular place set aside for worship. Second, we should have a particular time set aside for worship.

1. We should have a particular place set aside for worship.

2. We should have a particular time set aside for worship.

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Finally we MUST keep our windows open toward Jerusalem. Remember that Daniel was in a strange land, far away from the place he loved. To the Jew Jerusalem meant many things. It was the symbol of all that was ideal. Here was the capital of his nation. Here was the temple, the center of his worship and the very dwelling place of God. Jerusalem was his dream. Jerusalem was the hope of his life. No matter what happened to Daniel three times a day he went up to his chamber and looked out in the direction of his ideal.

We must do just that. If our world is to be any more than a great machine shop, any more than a whirling globe, we must keep a sense of the Infinite alive in our lives. This is the way out of the gloomy wood--KEEP YOUR WINDOWS OPEN TOWARD JERUSALEM.

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iii. and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he knelt upon his knees three times a day, and prayed. Daniel 6:10.

I. State the problem.

A. How can we keep our poise in the face of trouble and disappointment?

B. How can we find help from religion in times of disillusionment?

C. Some concrete examples.

See #879

2- The Story of Daniel and his "open windows".

A. Why was the book of Daniel written?

1. In the days of the bitter persecutions of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes who reigned from 175 to 164 B.C.
2. An effort to keep people faithful to religion.

B. The story
1. Preferred above all because of excellent spirit in it.
2. The plot against him.
The shock.

3- C. Quote the text.

iii. The story of Aldersgate

A. On the 17th of May, 1738.

B. He felt his heart strangely warmed.

C. Story of his conflict.

D. But he kept his windows open.

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iv. There are distinctive values in creating habits of worship and meditation.

A. A particular place

B. A particular time

C. We shall never find God enough unless until we have found him somewhere.

D. In time the vision will come.

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OPEN WINDOWS

"When Daniel learned that it had been signed, he went home (where the windows in his room were open in the direction of Jerusalem) and continued to kneel down three times a day, praying and thanking his God as he had done before."

Daniel 6:10 (Moffatt)
"...and his windows being open..."
Daniel 6:10

I. The problem

A. How can we keep our poise in the face of trouble and disappointment?

B. How can we find help in times of disillusionment?

C. How can we face disaster?

II. I think a helpful suggestion is found in the story of Daniel and his open windows

A. The Jews were bitterly persecuted during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164B.C.)

B. The book of Daniel was an attempt to keep the people faithful.

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B. Daniel was a man who was preferred above all because of the spirit that was in him.

1. The plot against him
2. The decree
3. Daniel's response.

III. Your house has windows

A. Anna Blake Mazquidas
"My house has windows that are wide and high;
I never keep the curtains drawn
Lest I should miss some glory of the sky
Some splendor of the breaking dawn.

My soul has windows where God's sun streams in,
They never, never shuttered are,
Lest their closed blinds hide in my soul some sin
And keep some lonely thing afar."

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B. Whittier writes:
"The west winds blow, and, singing low,
I hear the glad streams run;
The windows of my soul I throw wide open to the sun.

And so the shadows fall apart,
And so the west-winds play;
And all the windows of my heart
I open to the day."

C. Every human spirit possesses these "windows of the soul."

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IV. It is important for us to have these windows open.

1. The need for perspective
2. Let us try to avoid the view of the measurable.

B. The need to "air out" our spirits

V. There are distinct values in creating a pattern of worship in our lives.

A. A particular time

B. A particular place

C. A fixed habit

D. The resources of routine.

"To appreciate a cathedral, perspective is required. If we come too close to it, we shall have a better view of the statues, the portal, and the ornamentation, but we shall miss the general impression willed by the architect, which can be had only from a distance. To understand evolution we must have perspective in time, we must cover eons, and furthermore, study it, as it were, in motion, dynamically."

du Nouy
"Human Destiny"

"To understand this principle of larger spiritual preparedness is to move from spontaneous prayer to disciplined prayer. Instead of praying on the impulse of a mood, one may employ prayer to create the mood desired. Rather than use prayer as a last resort in desperate distraction, one may

pray as a first resort to prevent distraction and come to difficult situations resourcefully. By frequent practice in the spiritual exercises of prayer, it is possible to develop powers and controls, attitudes and habits, that will prove more adequate to every situation. Those who desire the results enough will order and discipline the hours of every day to cultivate the inner resources of faithful devotion to a cause.... Prayer is then the conscious experience of harmony and co-operation with a Creator of Values."

--Paul E. Johnson
"Psychology of Religion"

"If a microbe, living in one of the cracks of an elephant's skin, possessed our intelligence, and if his ancestors had built up and transmitted to him a science, as ours have done in less than ten generations, it is conceivable that he would not have a very clear idea of the laws governing his universe: the elephant. The microbe lives at the bottom of a valley one fifth of an inch deep, the equivalent to us of a canyon six or seven thousand feet high. There he may have created an image of his world very different from ours, and when the elephant scratches himself, or takes a bath, the microscopic dweller of the valley can be excused if he attributes these unpredictable cataclysms to an entirely different cause. Let us try to avoid the point of view of the microbe, for whom one day of twenty-four hours corresponds to a century, or four generations."

du Nouy
"Human Destiny"