

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

Expository Sermon

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DANIEL THE MAN OF A STEADFAST FAITH

Scripture Reading - Daniel 1: 8. 6:1-28.

Text - Daniel 6:23.

A MESSAGE FOR THE NEW YEAR

Introduction

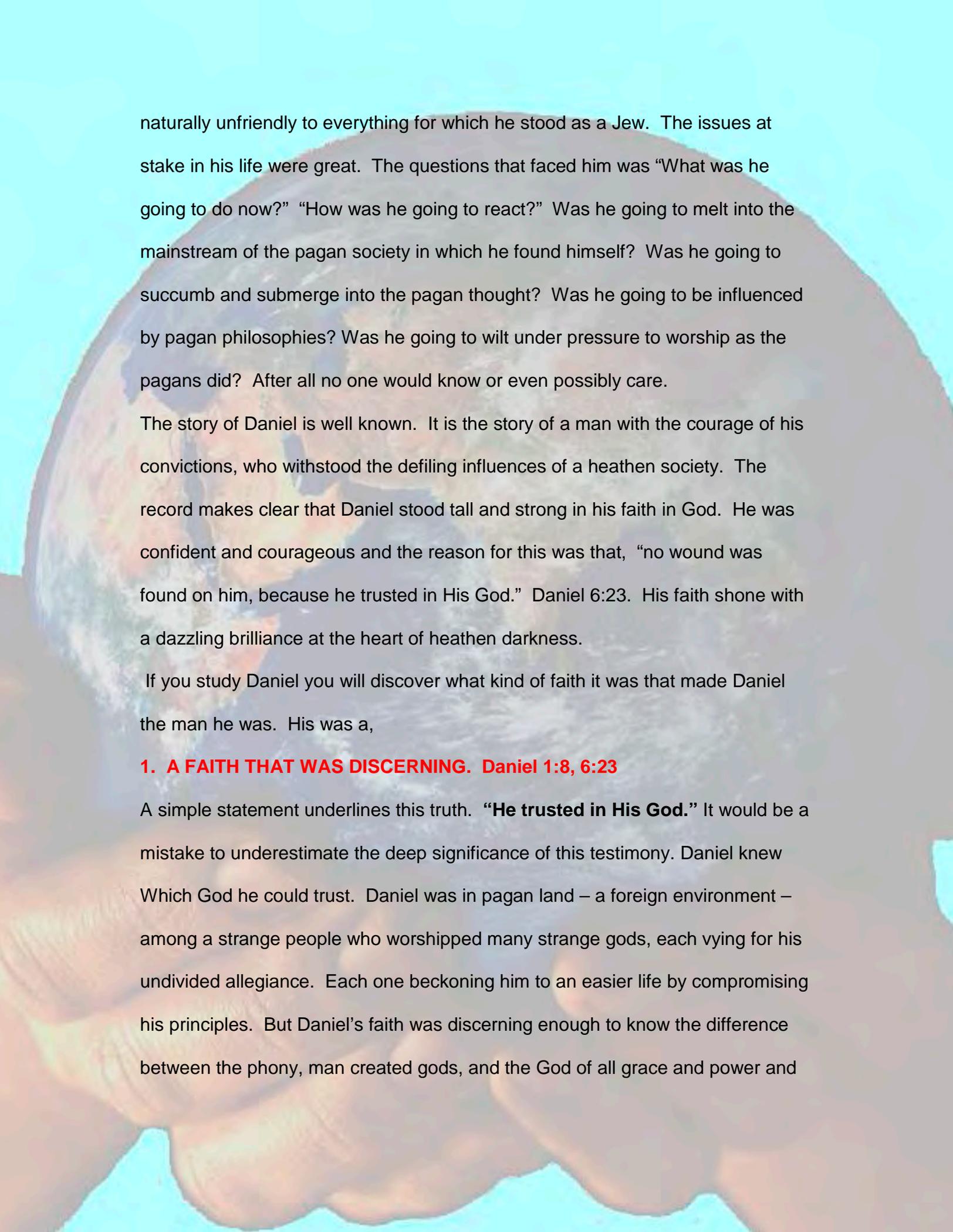
This man Daniel has always fascinated me, for he was a man of high principles and dynamic faith in extremely difficult circumstances. And in this day of degenerating faith and eroding morality, I want to direct my message to all of us who are facing the New Year with its uncertainties. As Christians we will, without doubt, be confronted by challenges to our faith by an ungodly society. It is a world which is malignantly hostile to Jesus Christ and His Gospel. We will be called upon to stand strong for the Lord Jesus Christ. The story of the man Daniel reveals unwavering faith, resolute courage, unshakable conviction and commitment to the God of Israel. The incident in Daniel chapter 6:1-28 highlights something about Daniel's resolute courage and unshakable faith in short succinct phrase. **“no harm was found on him because he had trusted in his God.”**

Dan.6:23

The jealous enemies of Daniel persuaded King Darius to issue

and edict they knew Daniel would not accept. They had tried finding fault with Daniel but they failed in their attempts. They realized that the only issue they could use was involved his commitment to God and His law.(See Daniel 6:5.) These enemies, who were the administrators, prefects, satraps, Advisors and governors persuaded the King to issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any God or man during the next thirty days except to you O king shall be thrown into the lion's den. (see Dan. 6:7-9) The decree was issued but Daniel refused to comply and was thrown into the lion's den The scripture records some significant words in Daniel:23 “. ... no harm was found on him because he trusted in his God. Had Daniel trusted in anything else, he certainly would have died.

Daniel, you remember, was not a citizen of Babylon. The Babylonians had invaded Israel and as was King Nebuchadnezzar's custom, the most intelligent men were taken with him to Babylon. These young men had to be, good character, superior intelligence and of fine physique. He was considered to be a young man of this caliber together with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were not ordinary obscure Jewish slaves. They were men of distinction who would be trained to take leadership in the nation. And so it was that Daniel at the age of about 15 found himself in an environment hostile to his faith, unfriendly to his way of worship and ignorant of his God. His people were hundreds of miles away. He was alone in a new and strange land and a captive of a foreign nation. The early Godly influences in his life were no longer there to support and encourage him. He was now planted in circumstances that were



naturally unfriendly to everything for which he stood as a Jew. The issues at stake in his life were great. The questions that faced him was “What was he going to do now?” “How was he going to react?” Was he going to melt into the mainstream of the pagan society in which he found himself? Was he going to succumb and submerge into the pagan thought? Was he going to be influenced by pagan philosophies? Was he going to wilt under pressure to worship as the pagans did? After all no one would know or even possibly care.

The story of Daniel is well known. It is the story of a man with the courage of his convictions, who withstood the defiling influences of a heathen society. The record makes clear that Daniel stood tall and strong in his faith in God. He was confident and courageous and the reason for this was that, “no wound was found on him, because he trusted in His God.” Daniel 6:23. His faith shone with a dazzling brilliance at the heart of heathen darkness.

If you study Daniel you will discover what kind of faith it was that made Daniel the man he was. His was a,

1. A FAITH THAT WAS DISCERNING. Daniel 1:8, 6:23

A simple statement underlines this truth. “**He trusted in His God.**” It would be a mistake to underestimate the deep significance of this testimony. Daniel knew Which God he could trust. Daniel was in pagan land – a foreign environment – among a strange people who worshipped many strange gods, each vying for his undivided allegiance. Each one beckoning him to an easier life by compromising his principles. But Daniel’s faith was discerning enough to know the difference between the phony, man created gods, and the God of all grace and power and

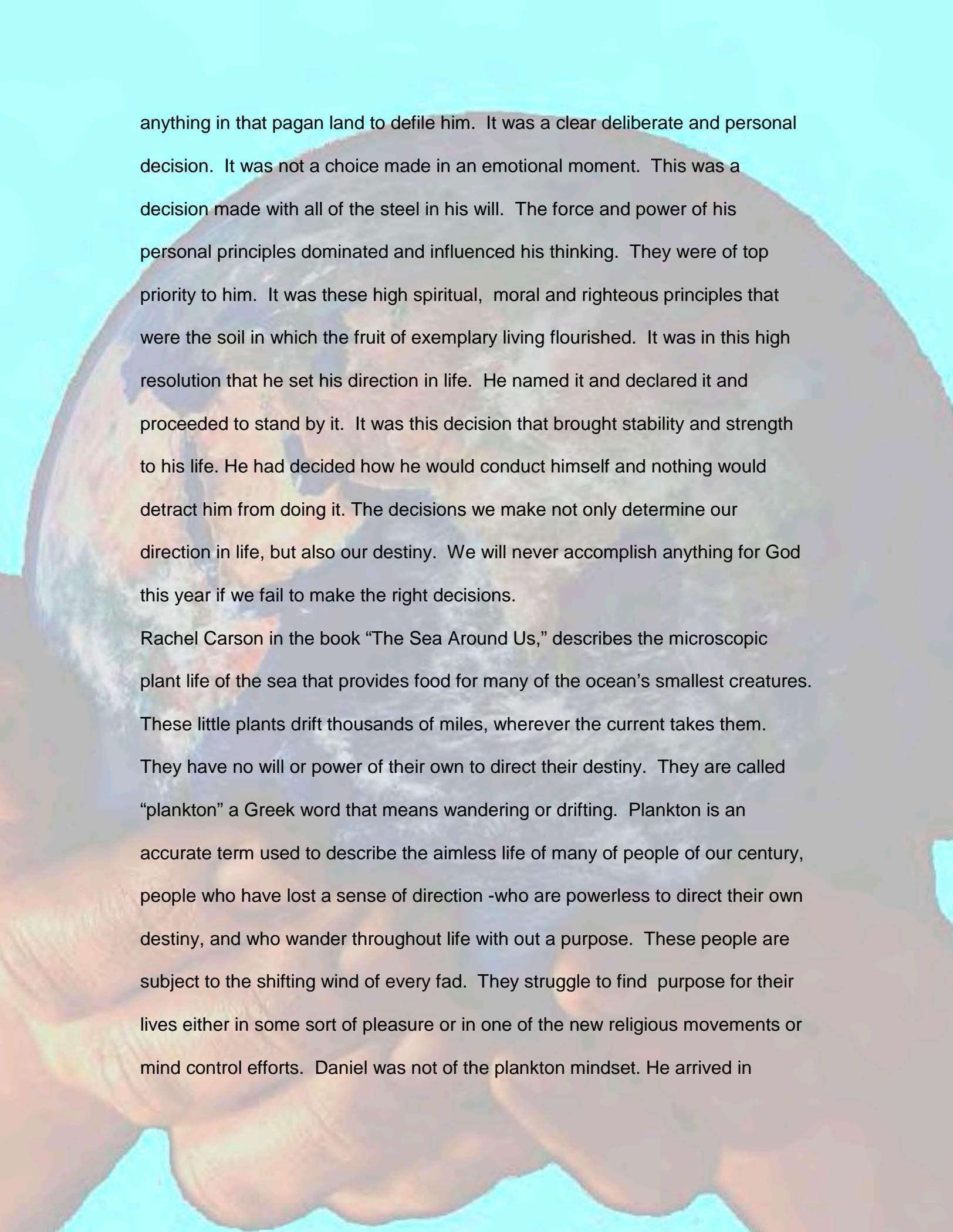
life. Against the backdrop of all of this, his faith remained firm and true to his God.

Now the discernment of his faith was revealed by,

a. The Decision He Made. Daniel 1:8. Early in his captivity that he set for himself parameters or guidelines for the way in which he was going to conduct his life. These guidelines was not imposed upon him from without, but from within. What is noticeable about the choices that Daniel made in pagan darkness was their clarity. He did not base his decision on vagueness or fuzziness.

There was a lot of vagueness in Daniel's day, even as there is in our day. Mixing the superstitions and idolatrous systems of other peoples had at times muddied the original faith of the Jewish religion. But Daniel was clear in his faith.

Decision not only defines purpose but also clarifies it. It was with piercing clarity that Daniel set down his purposes for living in this pagan country. He declared his purpose with power and passion in Daniel 1:8. It is an amazing resolution to which he came as red-blooded young man. For "he resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine." Now there was nothing intrinsically wrong with the King's meat and wine, but there had been some kind of religious consecration of the food to idols and in the mind of the Jew any food offered to idols had by that act been polluted. The Jew believed that if he partook of that food he would be defiled. That really is not the main issue. It is clear that no matter what temptation came to him he would not defile himself with it. The issue was that no matter what he faced, no matter what challenge came to him in Babylon, he resolved to keep himself righteous and pure. He was no going to allow

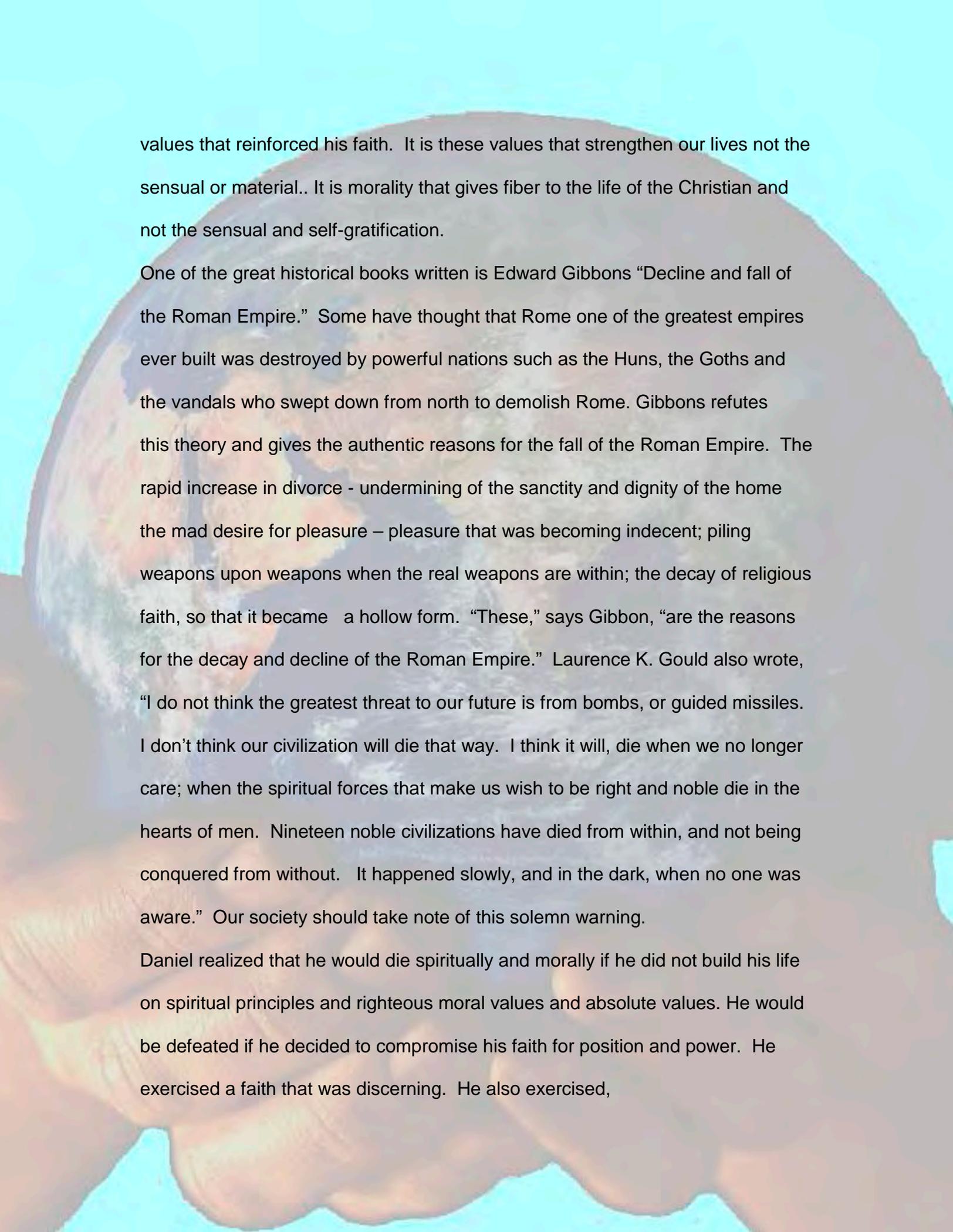


anything in that pagan land to defile him. It was a clear deliberate and personal decision. It was not a choice made in an emotional moment. This was a decision made with all of the steel in his will. The force and power of his personal principles dominated and influenced his thinking. They were of top priority to him. It was these high spiritual, moral and righteous principles that were the soil in which the fruit of exemplary living flourished. It was in this high resolution that he set his direction in life. He named it and declared it and proceeded to stand by it. It was this decision that brought stability and strength to his life. He had decided how he would conduct himself and nothing would detract him from doing it. The decisions we make not only determine our direction in life, but also our destiny. We will never accomplish anything for God this year if we fail to make the right decisions.

Rachel Carson in the book "The Sea Around Us," describes the microscopic plant life of the sea that provides food for many of the ocean's smallest creatures. These little plants drift thousands of miles, wherever the current takes them. They have no will or power of their own to direct their destiny. They are called "plankton" a Greek word that means wandering or drifting. Plankton is an accurate term used to describe the aimless life of many of people of our century, people who have lost a sense of direction -who are powerless to direct their own destiny, and who wander throughout life with out a purpose. These people are subject to the shifting wind of every fad. They struggle to find purpose for their lives either in some sort of pleasure or in one of the new religious movements or mind control efforts. Daniel was not of the plankton mindset. He arrived in

Babylon and resolved that he would not defile himself with the trinkets of that pagan state. This is the decision he made. Notice

b. The Discrimination He Showed. Daniel 1:8, 6:3. In life it is not so much that we make decisions in life. The question is “What kind of decisions are we going to make?” Some decisions we make are worse than making no decisions at all. There were many decisions that Daniel could have taken in Babylon. He was a young man away from the influences of the religious leadership. He is no doubt regarded as a spiritual giant in the Biblical story. He could have decided to go with the flow of that culture and that maybe in order if the flow is the right direction. Basically Daniel faced the timeless challenge between sensuality and spirituality - between moral purity and moral pollution - between that which was the material and that, which was eternal. Some of these opposites may not always be in conflict with each other. The material is not evil in itself. That which gives pleasure to the senses is not always depraved. It is when the material and the sensual begin to have a negative and defiling effect on us that the will is faced with a choice. It is when we go beyond moral purity and Godly spiritual boundaries that we find ourselves floundering in the morass of a moral mess and spiritual confusion. When decisions are made discernment should come into play. The fundamental question we should ask is “are the decisions we make going to help us or destroy us?” Are they long term or are they short term. Are we making decisions for the moment without any thought for the future? Are they compatible with the will and holy character of God. It was the discerning faith of Daniel that saw with a clear focus the things that were of spiritual, moral and eternal value. It was those values that made life worth living. They were the



values that reinforced his faith. It is these values that strengthen our lives not the sensual or material.. It is morality that gives fiber to the life of the Christian and not the sensual and self-gratification.

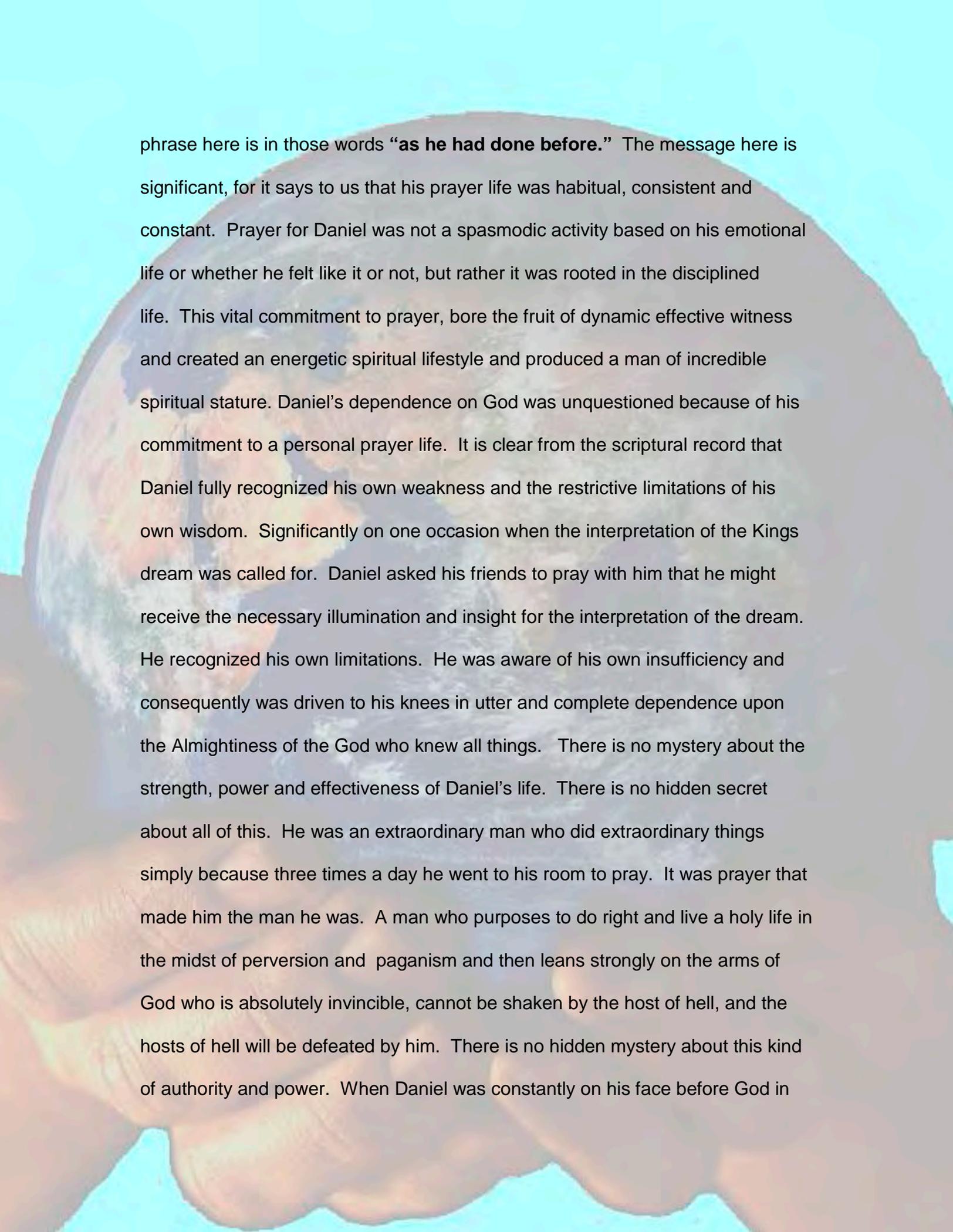
One of the great historical books written is Edward Gibbons “Decline and fall of the Roman Empire.” Some have thought that Rome one of the greatest empires ever built was destroyed by powerful nations such as the Huns, the Goths and the vandals who swept down from north to demolish Rome. Gibbons refutes this theory and gives the authentic reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire. The rapid increase in divorce - undermining of the sanctity and dignity of the home the mad desire for pleasure – pleasure that was becoming indecent; piling weapons upon weapons when the real weapons are within; the decay of religious faith, so that it became a hollow form. “These,” says Gibbon, “are the reasons for the decay and decline of the Roman Empire.” Laurence K. Gould also wrote, “I do not think the greatest threat to our future is from bombs, or guided missiles. I don’t think our civilization will die that way. I think it will, die when we no longer care; when the spiritual forces that make us wish to be right and noble die in the hearts of men. Nineteen noble civilizations have died from within, and not being conquered from without. It happened slowly, and in the dark, when no one was aware.” Our society should take note of this solemn warning.

Daniel realized that he would die spiritually and morally if he did not build his life on spiritual principles and righteous moral values and absolute values. He would be defeated if he decided to compromise his faith for position and power. He exercised a faith that was discerning. He also exercised,

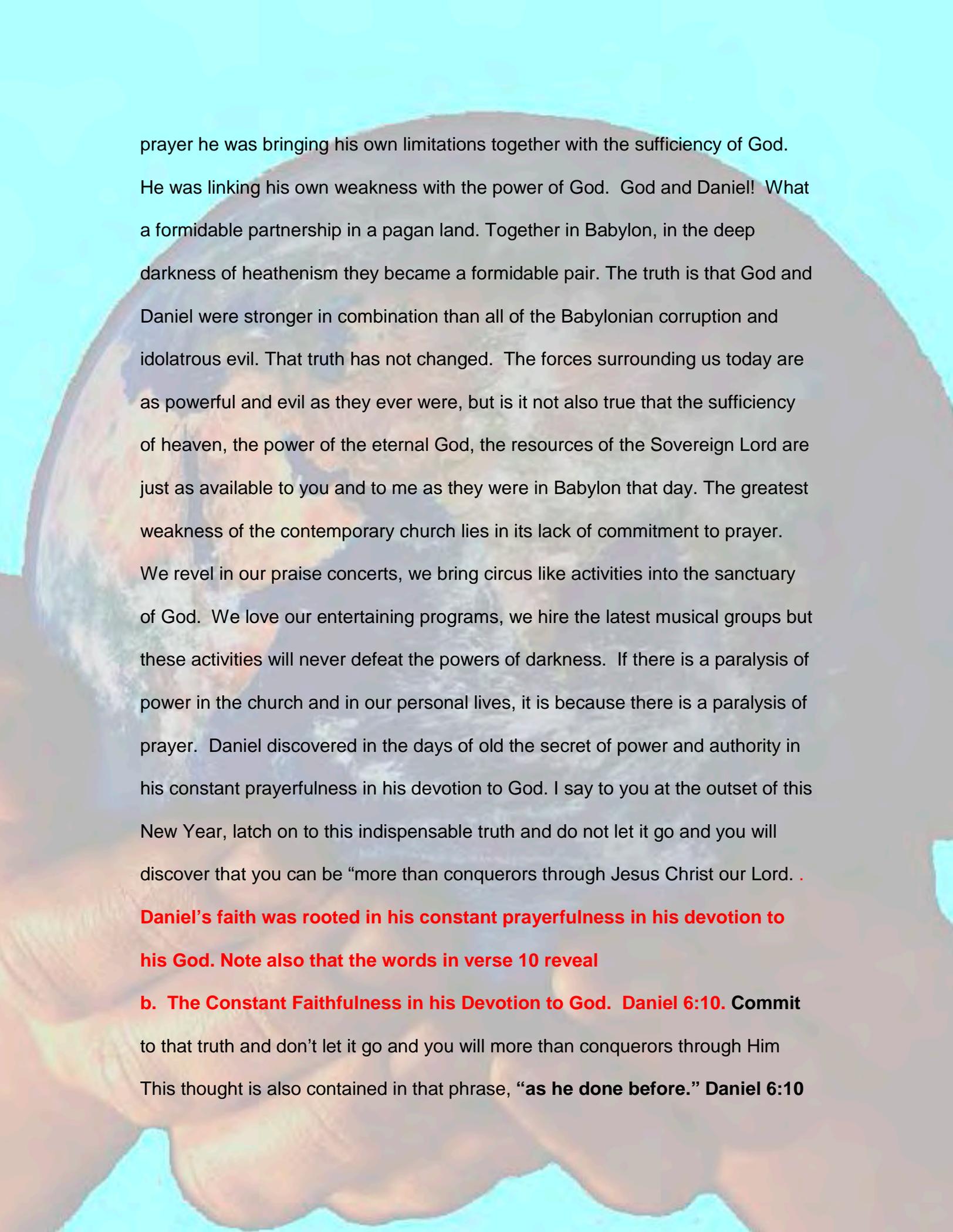
2. A FAITH THAT WAS DEVOTED. Daniel 6:1 –14.

The story is one of intrigue, lies and slander nurtured by a festering jealousy and carried with intense venom in the hearts and minds of the leaders of the country in order to destroy Daniel. You recall how the administrators and Satraps of Babylon 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. Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel except it has something to do with the law of his God. Daniel 6:4-5. And so they devised a plan. They went to the King and said that the leaders of the nation have all agreed that the King should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man in the next thirty days except you O King, shall be thrown into the den of lions. And in Daniel 6:10-11 we read, "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed giving thanks to his God, just as he had before. Then these men went in a group and found Daniel praying, and they reported it to the king. These verses tell us something important about his devotion to God. They speak to us of his,

a. His Constant Prayerfulness in His Devotion to God. Daniel 6:10. When he heard the edict had been published "he went to his upstairs room where the windows were open toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God as he had done before." The key



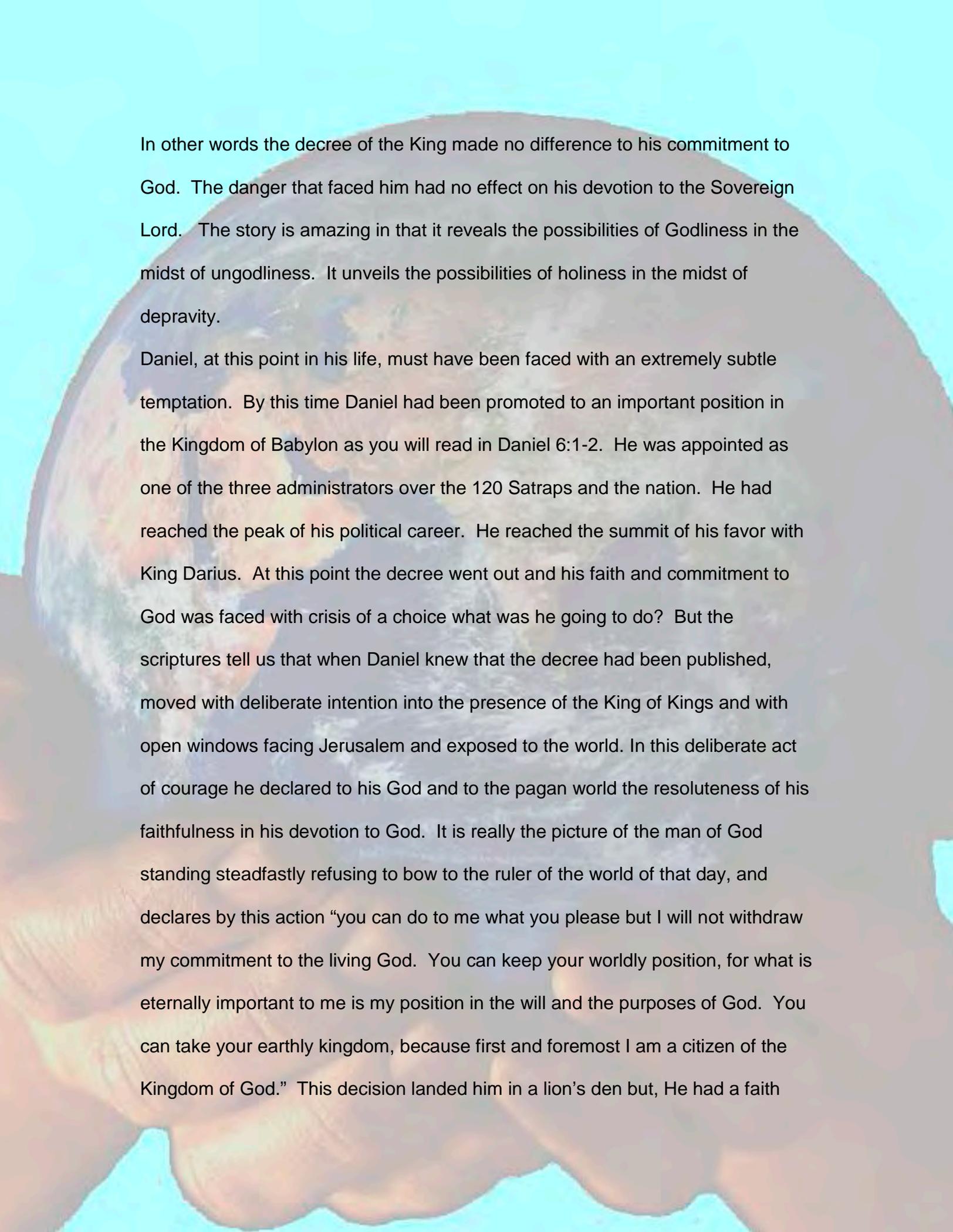
phrase here is in those words **“as he had done before.”** The message here is significant, for it says to us that his prayer life was habitual, consistent and constant. Prayer for Daniel was not a spasmodic activity based on his emotional life or whether he felt like it or not, but rather it was rooted in the disciplined life. This vital commitment to prayer, bore the fruit of dynamic effective witness and created an energetic spiritual lifestyle and produced a man of incredible spiritual stature. Daniel’s dependence on God was unquestioned because of his commitment to a personal prayer life. It is clear from the scriptural record that Daniel fully recognized his own weakness and the restrictive limitations of his own wisdom. Significantly on one occasion when the interpretation of the Kings dream was called for. Daniel asked his friends to pray with him that he might receive the necessary illumination and insight for the interpretation of the dream. He recognized his own limitations. He was aware of his own insufficiency and consequently was driven to his knees in utter and complete dependence upon the Almightyness of the God who knew all things. There is no mystery about the strength, power and effectiveness of Daniel’s life. There is no hidden secret about all of this. He was an extraordinary man who did extraordinary things simply because three times a day he went to his room to pray. It was prayer that made him the man he was. A man who purposes to do right and live a holy life in the midst of perversion and paganism and then leans strongly on the arms of God who is absolutely invincible, cannot be shaken by the host of hell, and the hosts of hell will be defeated by him. There is no hidden mystery about this kind of authority and power. When Daniel was constantly on his face before God in



prayer he was bringing his own limitations together with the sufficiency of God. He was linking his own weakness with the power of God. God and Daniel! What a formidable partnership in a pagan land. Together in Babylon, in the deep darkness of heathenism they became a formidable pair. The truth is that God and Daniel were stronger in combination than all of the Babylonian corruption and idolatrous evil. That truth has not changed. The forces surrounding us today are as powerful and evil as they ever were, but is it not also true that the sufficiency of heaven, the power of the eternal God, the resources of the Sovereign Lord are just as available to you and to me as they were in Babylon that day. The greatest weakness of the contemporary church lies in its lack of commitment to prayer. We revel in our praise concerts, we bring circus like activities into the sanctuary of God. We love our entertaining programs, we hire the latest musical groups but these activities will never defeat the powers of darkness. If there is a paralysis of power in the church and in our personal lives, it is because there is a paralysis of prayer. Daniel discovered in the days of old the secret of power and authority in his constant prayerfulness in his devotion to God. I say to you at the outset of this New Year, latch on to this indispensable truth and do not let it go and you will discover that you can be “more than conquerors through Jesus Christ our Lord. .

Daniel’s faith was rooted in his constant prayerfulness in his devotion to his God. Note also that the words in verse 10 reveal

b. The Constant Faithfulness in his Devotion to God. Daniel 6:10. Commit to that truth and don’t let it go and you will more than conquerors through Him This thought is also contained in that phrase, **“as he done before.” Daniel 6:10**



In other words the decree of the King made no difference to his commitment to God. The danger that faced him had no effect on his devotion to the Sovereign Lord. The story is amazing in that it reveals the possibilities of Godliness in the midst of ungodliness. It unveils the possibilities of holiness in the midst of depravity.

Daniel, at this point in his life, must have been faced with an extremely subtle temptation. By this time Daniel had been promoted to an important position in the Kingdom of Babylon as you will read in Daniel 6:1-2. He was appointed as one of the three administrators over the 120 Satraps and the nation. He had reached the peak of his political career. He reached the summit of his favor with King Darius. At this point the decree went out and his faith and commitment to God was faced with crisis of a choice what was he going to do? But the scriptures tell us that when Daniel knew that the decree had been published, moved with deliberate intention into the presence of the King of Kings and with open windows facing Jerusalem and exposed to the world. In this deliberate act of courage he declared to his God and to the pagan world the resoluteness of his faithfulness in his devotion to God. It is really the picture of the man of God standing steadfastly refusing to bow to the ruler of the world of that day, and declares by this action "you can do to me what you please but I will not withdraw my commitment to the living God. You can keep your worldly position, for what is eternally important to me is my position in the will and the purposes of God. You can take your earthly kingdom, because first and foremost I am a citizen of the Kingdom of God." This decision landed him in a lion's den but, He had a faith

that was devoted to God no matter what. There was a constancy in his faithfulness in his devotion to God. Furthermore he had

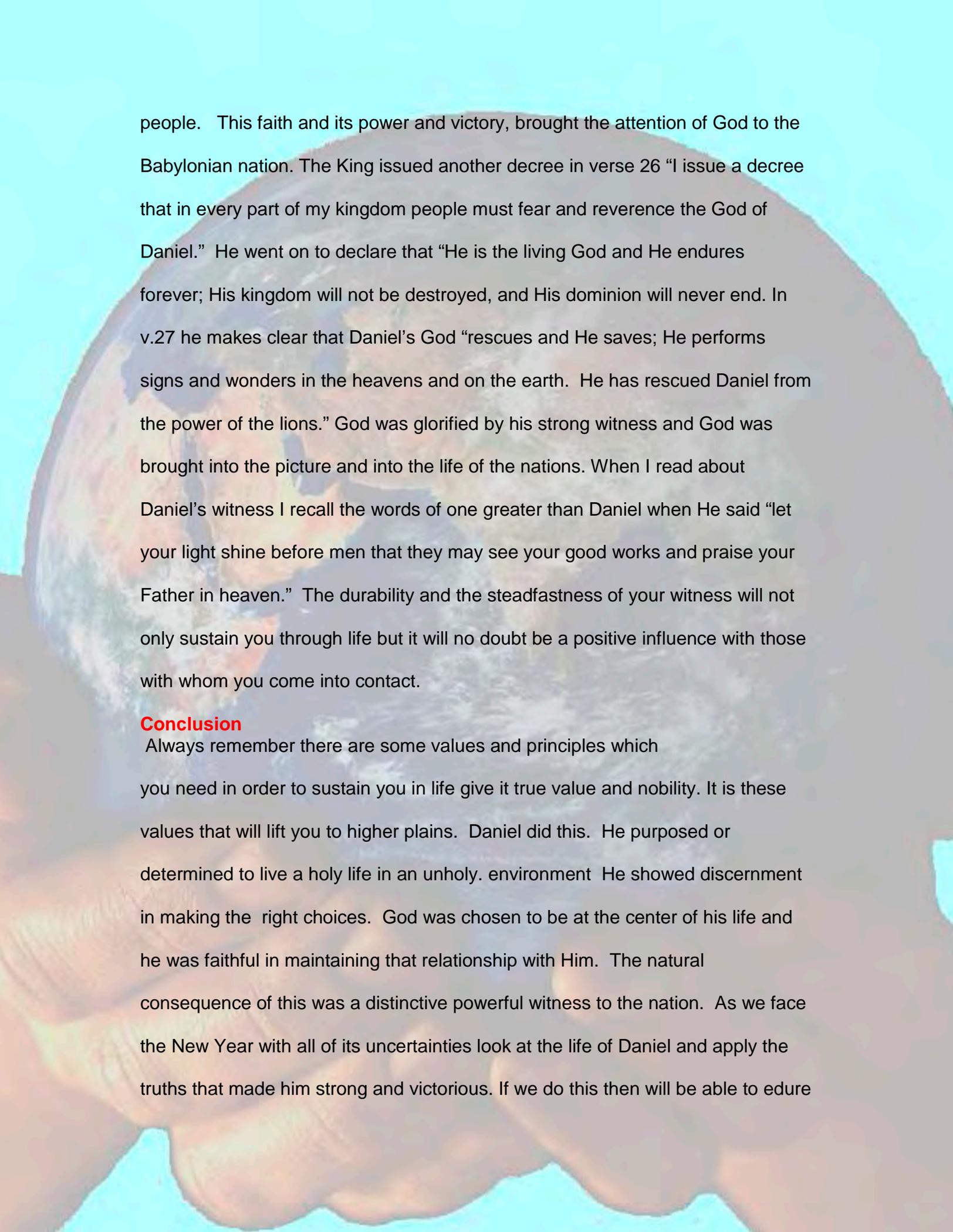
3. A FAITH THAT WAS DURABLE. Daniel 6:23 – 28. Though King was reluctant to punish Daniel, he ordered Daniel to be thrown in the lion's den

The story makes quite clear that God protected Daniel through the night hours in that lion's den. When he was lifted from the lion's den the scripture tells us that

“No wound was found on him because he trusted in his God.” Let me very briefly touch on two truths in relation to the durability of Daniel's faith. Firstly it was

a. Distinctive. Daniel 6; 23. The witness of Daniel's faith revealed itself in Babylon. His testimony showed itself to the people. The King recognized his innate abilities. The king had planned to set him over the entire kingdom. But there was jealousy among the other leaders of the nation and they deliberately sought to find something against him, which they failed to do. They concluded that the only thing with which they could find fault was something related to his commitment to God. It had to do with praying to any God or man within the period of thirty days except the King, they would be thrown into the lion's den. Daniel made his decision. Three times a day he prayed in his room for the entire world to see. With Daniel –position! – Power - prestige! - Politics! were incidental to his faith and were inferior to his love for God. His faith shone like a light in the darkness. It was distinctive. He was not ashamed of his witness

b. Dynamic. Daniel 6:23-27. The strong witness of Daniel impacted that pagan nation. The result of this vigorous faith was that God was exalted in an idolatrous



people. This faith and its power and victory, brought the attention of God to the Babylonian nation. The King issued another decree in verse 26 “I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.” He went on to declare that “He is the living God and He endures forever; His kingdom will not be destroyed, and His dominion will never end. In v.27 he makes clear that Daniel’s God “rescues and He saves; He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.” God was glorified by his strong witness and God was brought into the picture and into the life of the nations. When I read about Daniel’s witness I recall the words of one greater than Daniel when He said “let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven.” The durability and the steadfastness of your witness will not only sustain you through life but it will no doubt be a positive influence with those with whom you come into contact.

Conclusion

Always remember there are some values and principles which you need in order to sustain you in life give it true value and nobility. It is these values that will lift you to higher plains. Daniel did this. He purposed or determined to live a holy life in an unholy environment He showed discernment in making the right choices. God was chosen to be at the center of his life and he was faithful in maintaining that relationship with Him. The natural consequence of this was a distinctive powerful witness to the nation. As we face the New Year with all of its uncertainties look at the life of Daniel and apply the truths that made him strong and victorious. If we do this then will be able to edure

the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.” William Shakespeare. You will discover what it means to live the life of the “more the conqueror.”

May you all have a blessed and fruitful New Year.



