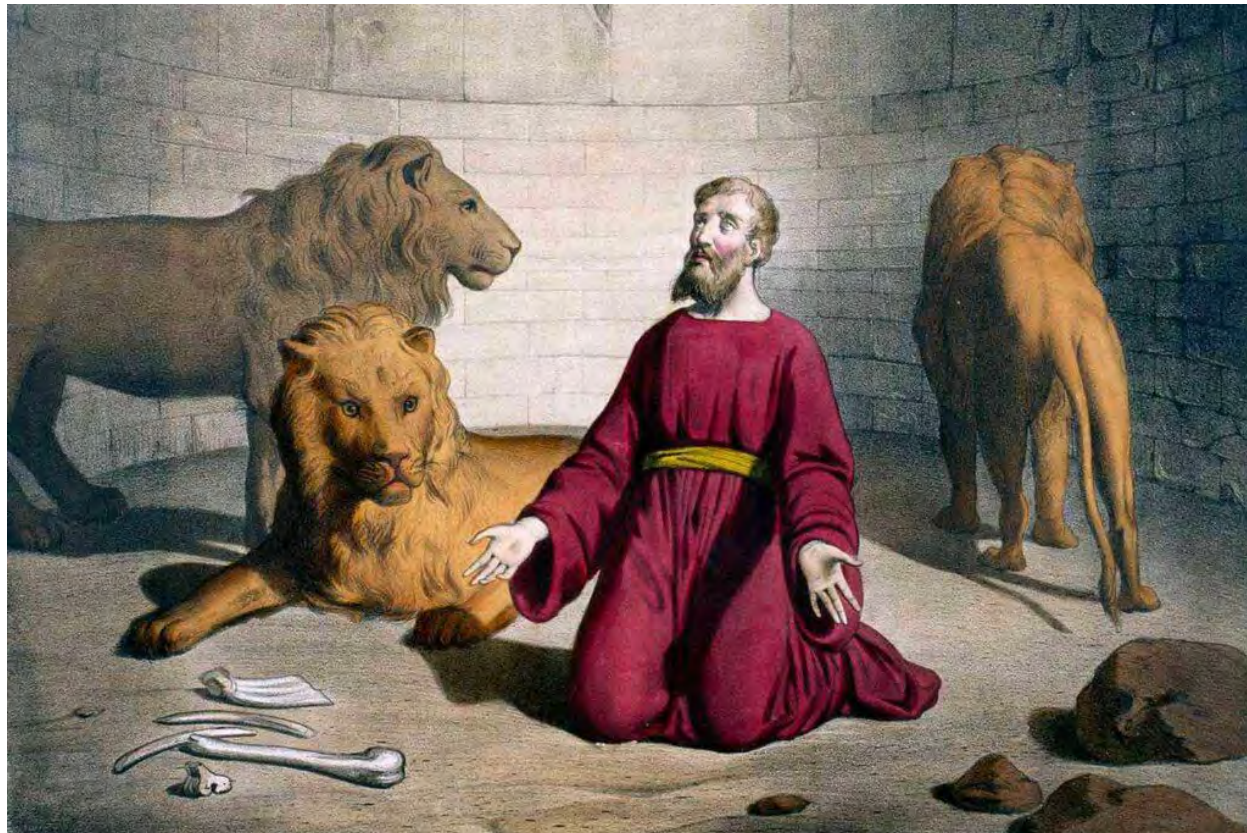


## Daniel's Faith and Courage: A Sermon at Cheon Won Church

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Hello dear family, how are you? Nice to meet you.

The title of the sermon I prepared today is Daniel's faith and courage. Perhaps a more poignant title would be "Even If God Does Not," and you will understand what this means in a short time.

Today, I would like to begin with the story of Daniel, widely known as one of the great prophets of the Old Testament. If you look at the Old Testament, it vividly records the history of how God saved the Israelites by directly intervening through liberators and prophets in surreal and supernatural ways, directly demonstrating His awesome almighty power and omnipotence.

It is very simple to sum up in one word the essence of the lessons and teachings that God wanted to express through the Old Testament, which records the long 4,000 years of history from the creation of heaven and earth all the way to Jesus. The basic core theme was: "Everyone must absolutely obey God's words and commands." To elaborate, as long as we uphold absolute faith in Jehovah God, the Creator of all things including humans, and the one and only God who rules over all providential history, and absolutely obey His words without doubting, God will take care of everything in our lives. He takes responsibility for and protects us, and sometimes shows amazing miracles, but on the contrary, we see that he teaches humankind severe lessons if we doubt or disobey His words.

If you look at Cheon Seong Gyeong p. 31 (10-349, 60.11.27) True Parents said:

"God worked hard to raise up numerous prophets throughout the course of history. In order to save you, He had countless people walk the path of persecution and martyrdom throughout the course of history until today. This is the historical God."

Also, in Cheon Seong Gyeong, p. 130 (71.3.27) Father says:

"What were the prophets commissioned to teach mankind? They had to teach us that, to follow God's will, we must establish the principle of obedience and carry on a providence rooted way back in history. Therefore, there had to be someone who was more loyal to God than others were loyal to Satan. God must teach us such principles."

In order to save all fallen humans who have left God's embrace ever since due to the disbelief of the first human beings, Adam and Eve, He led countless people through the course of history to walk the path of persecution and martyrdom, leading to the providence of salvation that continues to this day. Therefore, God is known for how hard He worked to raise numerous prophets throughout the course of history. He also said that there has to be someone who is more loyal to God than the others are loyal to Satan.

In the Old Testament, in addition to Exodus, which records the miracles of Moses, we also have the

writings of prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. If you read books such as Jonah and Kings, the amazing miracles that God showed through the prophets in each era are recorded very vividly and realistically. The Book of Daniel, which we will discuss today, is called "the Book of Revelation of the Old Testament", comparable to the Book of Revelation in the New Testament. The word Daniel in Hebrew means 'God is my judge.'

Daniel was one of the great prophets who served as an outstanding religious hero during the Babylonian captivity of the Jewish people around the 6th century BC. At that time, Daniel, along with the Jewish people, was taken captive to Babylon. Not only was he from a noble family, but he was also very intelligent and had outstanding integrity. God gave him great wisdom and the ability to interpret dreams, so even though he was a captive, he was trusted by the king. He united all these virtues in his person and ascended to the position of second son of the ruler of Babylon.

The king's attendants, who were very jealous and displeased with the fact that a captive foreigner was receiving the king's favor, plotted to be rid of Daniel. In other words, under the pretext of strengthening the royal authority, a decree was issued prohibiting the people of the country from praying to any god for 30 days and requiring them to pray only to the king.

This was to target Daniel, who was praying to Jehovah God three times a day no matter what. However, even though Daniel knew that he would be captured and killed, he paid no heed to it, kept the window open, and prayed more confidently to Jehovah God as if to demonstrate, until he was arrested and thrown into the lion's den.

In Daniel 6:10, it is written:

"When Daniel learned that the king's seal had been placed on this decree, he returned to his house, went up to the upper room, opened the window toward Jerusalem, and knelt down on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks to his God, as he had done before."

Here we discover Daniel's truly amazing faith. At the very least, if we want to properly believe in God, we must imitate Daniel's courageous faith. Even though Daniel was taken captive in Babylon, which worshiped a foreign god, he was not affected by his environment at all and continued his regular prayer life three times a day as always.

In fact, don't we often neglect our prayer life for one reason or another when our environment suddenly changes or we encounter various difficult situations? Don't you sometimes skip prayer or Hoon Dok Hae by making excuses such as being busy, suddenly having an important appointment, being sleepy, or any other interference? However, even though Daniel faced the risk of being thrown into the lion's den and losing his life for the sake of his faithful prayer life, he never wavered in his belief that God would protect him, and he prayed according to his usual discipline. At least, we come to a new realization that it is only through this kind of absolute faith like Daniel that God's power and miracles are manifest.

However, until now, many people have said, "I will believe in God more than anyone else. I will go to church diligently. I will lead a good life of faith and prayer. I will live by Your words." We see that there are not many people who hold fast onto their hearts and continue their faith to the very end even though they have made promises and pledges. Sometimes in life, when we encounter difficulties big or small, or things don't go well at home, or things don't go well in business, we use all of these as excuses to complain that God will help us, that going to church doesn't help, and so we gradually distance ourselves from the church and leave God's side.

Doesn't the Source of all blessings who governs life and death, fortune and misfortune, watch over us? Such and such a person could not endure even such small hardships and trials all the way to the end, and in the end, God had no choice but to weep as He watched this person leave His arms, kicking away this amazing heavenly blessing that could have led him to heaven.

Please keep in mind that God likes and is most pleased with those who keep their faith until the end, no matter what difficulties they face, and God will always protect and bless them!!!

However, even though Daniel was thrown into the lion's den for breaking the king's edict, the king, who loved Daniel so much, must have felt so uneasy. According to the book of Daniel, the king gave up all entertainment that night and could not sleep properly, thinking only about Daniel. It says this in the Bible. Early in the morning the king went to the lions' den and called out: "Daniel, are you alive?"

What happened? Daniel, who naturally should have been eaten by the lions and disappeared without a trace, surprisingly survived, and answered that God had sent an angel to seal the lions' mouths overnight. Accordingly, the king lifted Daniel out of the lions' den and threw the bad people who had framed him into the lions' den instead. For Daniel, what a dramatic miracle of reversal this was! This clearly shows God's sovereign power.

Along with this, another amazing miracle appears in the Book of Daniel. Among the Jewish people who were taken captive to Babylon, there were three friends like Daniel who were recognized for their outstanding character and ability and were appointed as court officials. However, in order to strengthen his rule over Babylon and the people of its neighboring countries, the king of Babylon had a mammoth statue of pure gold image made in his own image, erected it on a wide plain, and commanded all the countries, "Whenever you hear the sound of trumpets, bow down to my image. Otherwise, you will be thrown alive into a blazing furnace." The king issued this edict.

However, the three friends, who had absolute faith like Daniel, were also accused of disloyalty by the king's jealous retainers, and were arrested and brought before the king on charges of not bowing before the idol. Since Daniel's friends also had the king's confidence, it was too heartbreaking to just kill them, so there is a scene where the king makes a final conciliation by saying that he will guarantee their lives if they bow to the golden statue even now. However, the three friends firmly rejected the king's offer, answering in Daniel 3:17-18:

"O king, if there is a God whom we serve, he is able to save us from the blazing furnace, and he will deliver us from your hand. Yet if He does not do so, know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or bow down to the golden image you have set up."

Such a confident and courageous answer has become a model symbol of the Christian faith that has maintained its faith in God without fear of any persecution, even death. However, in the past, many martyrs followed such faith, but in today's world, everyone only seeks their own interests. Surely it would be very difficult to find such a true believer.

There are many believers who easily fall prey to various temptations such as worldly wealth, power, and fame. How many people will be able to keep their faith when they are outlawed and persecuted by powerful state authorities, or when they are told that if they do not renounce their faith, everything will be taken away? Like the Ehwa Womans University incident in the early days of our church: forced expulsion and retirement by powerful public authority. I ask that we all give a round of applause of gratitude and praise with respect to the great courage of our seniors who boldly quit school and abandoned their careers, saying, "I can never abandon this way and this truth, which is more precious than my life, no matter what happens."

In this way, a true believer is someone whose faith in God is not shaken in the slightest even if the powerful might of Satan compromises their lives. Among the answers of these three friends, the answer that best exemplifies the essence of faith is the word 'even if He does not.' In other words, "If there is a God whom we serve, He is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace and from the hand of the king. But even if he doesn't, that is, if God doesn't deliver us from the blazing furnace, even if He doesn't save us from the blazing furnace, even if we are burned to death, we will never serve your gods, and we will never bow down to the golden statue you have set up." This is it. Where does one get the courage to answer like this? Isn't this an impossible answer without absolute confidence in God's faith and power?

In Christianity this word is shortened to 'Even if He does not do so' and has also been made into a song of praise. As we walk the path of faith, we must always keep this word engraved in our hearts. Whenever we pray, we should pray publicly, but sometimes we pray for things we personally wish for, such as my own goal, something I really want to achieve, my health to improve, or my family to become better, and then I add a filial piety offering as an afterthought. Don't you even set conditions for your work?

But the problem is that when such earnest prayers do not come true, when you do not receive an answer to your prayers from God, when increasingly difficult things come up, and even when you sometimes feel discouraged or disappointed, this is how you should pray at such times.

"Even if God does not hear my prayers, even if He does not grant my wishes, even if He doesn't, even though what I hoped doesn't come to pass, even if I suffer disadvantages or suffer from the world because of this path of faith, my faith in Heavenly Parent and the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind will never waver or change. I will never waver or betray God. I will follow this path of faith to the very end." This is the kind of confession of faith you must make. Aju!!

Could you all repeat it out loud? "Even if You don't, I love You. Even if He doesn't, I'm grateful. Even if He doesn't say so, I absolutely believe it." Aju!!

Now let's go back to the story of the Book of Daniel. What happened to the three people who disobeyed the king's orders and did not bow to the golden statue? Of course, wouldn't they all have been thrown into a blazing furnace and burned up without a trace?

In the Book of Daniel, it is written like this: "The angry king of Babylon ordered the oven heated seven times hotter, the three men bound tightly and thrown alive into the furnace. The blast furnace was so hot that even those who put them in themselves burned to death. However, rather than being burned to death, the three people thrown into the fire were just fine in the blazing furnace without a single scorch.

The king was astonished and cried, "We threw three people into the fire. I saw four men loose and walking around in the fire? And one of them looks like the Son of God [Note: traditionally considered either Jesus or an angel]!" he shouted. The king called the three out, and they walked out of the fire clean, without any burnt smell or scorch marks. The king praised God and asked, "What God made them like this?" He paid homage to God and announced, "No one in this land of Babylon may blaspheme Jehovah anymore. This is the king's edict. Issue it!" It is recorded like this:

"We command all of you to give great thanks and applause of glory to Jehovah God, who saved Daniel the Prophet and his three friends, who absolutely believed in God, by performing a great miracle."

Yes, we should be thankful for everything. You just have to be thankful, you have to be thankful no matter what happens, you have to be thankful despite it, and you have to be thankful even if he doesn't do it.

In this context, I would like to briefly talk about the situation our Japanese church is facing.

On July 8 last year, former Japanese Prime Minister Abe was shot dead. For more than a year after the incident, various media outlets in Japan have been posting negative messages about our Japanese Unification Church. The media have been reporting only biased news, in particular, only covering one-sided claims from victims of the Inspirational Commercial Act, without even verifying the facts. They are being singled out indiscriminately. In short, with the Japanese government taking the lead, the Japanese Communist Party, which hates our church the most, has become the driving force behind it, with the left-wing media joining in and the Christian community actively taking the lead. Meanwhile, with the intention of completely eradicating the Unification Church of Japan, efforts are being made to dissolve the Japan Family Federation religious association while intensively generating negative public opinion in society.

Currently, Prime Minister Kishida has submitted a motion for a request for a dissolution order against the Unification Church to the Japanese Council of Religious Affairs. If the Japanese Council of Religious Affairs approves the request for a dissolution order, that will lead to a lawsuit and then the legal battle will continue. However, while we have a firm belief that Heaven will prevail in the end, we cannot stand idly by and watch the suffering and hardship that our Japanese members are going through, so all members around the world are now praying with one heart and one mind for the Japanese church and our members, and are submitting petitions to the Japanese government to change its intentions regarding the dissolution order. I would like to ask all members of the church to participate in this petition and to fill out one sheet each, including children, and return it to the church by the day after tomorrow. We also ask that you go online to the Japanese government site and sign the petition.

In fact, the unjust persecution and slander that our Unification Church of Japan has been subjected to by the Japanese left-wing media, some Christian churches, and the Communist Party is unspeakable. The fact that abduction, illegal confinement and forced conversion of more than 4,300 people over 44 years was openly carried out in Japan - a so-called developed country that is supposed to value freedom and the dignity of human rights the most - is truly unbelievable. In spite of this difficult and challenging environment, unparalleled in the world, the Japanese church has achieved remarkable revival and development in a short period of time.

Not only that, but the Japanese members have laid the foundation for miraculous global mission work through their tearful dedication and hard work. In particular, they have provided support through raising funds so that True Parents can proceed with the global providence according to need. This is a proud achievement that should be praised by all generations.

Chambumo Gyeong p. 693 (K):

"In 1999, a year before the arrival of the new millennium, for the sake of the world, 12,000 Japanese women were sent out as missionaries to 150 nations in groups of 80 each. A total of more than 20,000 Japanese women went out to the world as missionaries starting from 1994.

When True Parents toured the mission countries during this time, they took time to encourage these missionaries. On this foundation, True Parents announced on January 1, 1998 that Japan was elevated from the position of Eve nation to that of mother nation."

According to True Parents, the number of Japanese members sent out for missions around the world exceeds 20,000, which is truly unimaginable. When I saw that True Parents sent 80 members to each of 150 countries around the world and also 120 members to each of the 33 countries in South America, I was surprised that the Japanese church had such a foundation. And I was surprised that there were so many members who are absolutely obedient to True Parents' request.

From small island nations you've never heard of, to remote parts of Africa, to Islamic or communist

countries where you sometimes have to risk your life, it takes a lot of faith and courage to leave your family and loved ones with no money.

My wife and I went to Japan in 1994, almost 30 years ago, and did missionary work for a short time, When True Parents suddenly instructed Japanese sister members to become overseas missionaries. I was very worried about how many of them would follow this order, considering how the Korean church was doing things. However I was so moved that I cried when I saw the young Japanese wives preparing to leave their young children in the care of their husbands. After that, when I returned to Korea and worked as a pastor, I sometimes cried when I saw the Japanese missionaries, and I felt proud and grateful, felt they were beautiful - and I just wanted to do better for them. Please give a big round of applause of gratitude and encouragement for our Japanese missionaries!!!

1 Peter 4:12-13 says the following:

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Peter tells us not to be surprised when the flames of trials come upon us, as if it were something strange. Rather we should rejoice because we are participating in the sufferings of Christ. Therefore, the trials and tribulations that we are facing today are actually participating in the sufferings of True Parents, and we should overcome them with joy. As True Parents also said that the trials that we encounter are a process to make us more valuable and shining, we should use these trials and tribulations as an opportunity to strengthen our faith and to deeply repent and awaken our community, which for one reason or another has been harmed and disorganized. If all of us are once again united with renewed resolve, it will surely be a golden opportunity to bring about more amazing miracles granted by Heaven to reverse the inevitable tide, and I am sure it will be the starting point for the renewed ascent of our Church.

Maybe our church can't go on as we are, and heaven needs to thrust us back into the midst of suffering to bring us back together, to reunite us, to recharge our faith, to revitalize us. So let's have a movement of repentance again, let's have a movement of restoring our faith to its original fervor again; let's have a movement of standing up tall again, let's have a movement of being strong again, let's have a movement of being fully aligned with True Mother again, let's have a movement of being grateful for these trials and tribulations during True Mother's ascendancy (reign), and let's have a movement of moving forward in ever greater leaps, bringing ever more triumphs!.

Let us pray all together.