

Do you realize that you are being watched? Take a look at your cellphone. You visit different sites on the internet. All of a sudden you are getting ads on your phone of companies or businesses that promote similar products. Or you just happen to drive thru a red light or a toll booth on the Florida turnpike. A month later you get a ticket in the mail, because a picture of your license plate was taken at the time you broke the law. You and I are being tracked, watched.

Today, we are going to be looking at 2 men who were being watched – Daniel and a man named Martin Luther. Let’ turn on the cameras, and cellphone data trackers to see what we can learn about these two men. Our theme today is: “Vote For The Right Candidate!

When you are going to cast your vote in a political election, you should study the candidate, and how their policies line up with Biblical values. Do they say one thing, and then when they are around a different audience say another thing? As a result they don’t really stand for anything. Today, we are not going to look at Joe Biden or President Trump, but two other candidates. I think you would vote for both of them in an election.

First, there is Daniel. At the time of our lesson, he was an older man, perhaps in his 80’s. He had been serving in the government for the Medes and Persians. He and the rest of the Jews were in captivity, living in a foreign land under a foreign ruler.

Let’s look at Martin Luther. As we meet up with him, he is man who is 34 years of age. He had gone to school to be a lawyer, but felt that was not where the Lord wanted him to be. His sins troubled him and so he gave up a law career and entered a monastery. He became a monk. He slept on cold floors and beat himself to try and pay for his sins. He thought the life as a monk and eventually as a priest would merit God’s favor.

Back to Daniel. Daniel served faithfully as a top administrator for King Darius. The king was planning to promote him above all the other government officials. Some of those officials didn’t like it that Daniel, a Jew, would be higher in rank than they, and so they plotted against him. And as they plotted, they noticed something about Daniel. Look at verse 5: “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”

Daniel’s enemies knew that the only way to get Daniel was to do something against his religion. And so they plotted his demise. They had the king make up a law that for one month, no one could pray to any god except the king. Anyone who prayed to a god must be thrown into the lion’s den. The king liked this idea – it appealed to his ego. And so he put the decree in writing. It became a law.

Now since Daniel was such a high ranking government official, he learned about this law immediately. He knew that people would be watching him. He could have changed his daily routine. He could have worshiped God secretly instead of openly, just to stay out of trouble. He could have said, “I’ll just pray to the king for one month, and then I’ll go back to my old prayer practice. But that’s not what he did. Look at verse 10: “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 done before.” “I’m not going to cover up my faith,” Daniel probably thought. “I’m going to keep praying. I’m going to keep serving God. I’m going to worship him openly, just as I have done all my life. I will not hide my faith.” This was Daniel’s routine, to openly spend time with God three times a day, meditating on his Word, and praying.

As we look at Martin Luther and his life, he was serving not in the government but the church. And you might say his overseer was the Pope. Pope Leo X claimed to have the ability to free people from the punishments of hell and purgatory through the selling of indulgences. In other words, you could buy forgiveness. The pope claimed to have the sole authority over the interpretation of what God's Word said. The Pope taught that you are not saved by faith alone in Christ but you needed to do many good works. This last teaching really affected Luther. Luther tried as best he could to do what the pope wanted. He would do good things. So he entered a monastery. He beat himself, he prayed, he worshiped. He would do all he could to escape God's wrath.

He struggled and struggled with this, until as a Professor he sat down and studied Romans 1. In it he read about a righteousness has come to us from God - by faith. At that point Luther said to himself, "the Gospel is the good news that Jesus lived a perfect life as my substitute, and that he died on the cross. He didn't die for Himself, so He must have died for me. Jesus provided me with the righteousness I need. How does His righteousness become mine? Not by beating myself and trying to reform my life, but simply by faith in Jesus! He became what He was not - sin - so that I would become what I was not - righteous!" This "tower experience" set him free from the deceit that he had been put under for his whole life - that he had to punish himself for his sins - and set him free from God's wrath. Luther discerned the truth, that a man is saved by God's grace through faith. He saw the Pope's teaching for what it was, a devastating eternal error. On October 31st, 1517, 500 years ago, he posted 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg to debate the Catholic Church on this teaching and others.

Here are a few of those 95 thesis. Thesis 1. The entire life of a believer is one of repentance, heartfelt sorrow over sin, and looking to Christ alone for forgiveness. Thesis 27. It is a manmade doctrine to teach as soon as the money in the chest rings, the soul from purgatory springs. Thesis 50. If the pope knew the tactics of the indulgence preachers, he would let St. Peter's church go to ashes, then it should be built up with skin, flesh and bones of his sheep. Thesis 62. The true treasure of the church is the Gospel of the glory and grace of God. As a result of these 95 thesis, Luther was excommunicated and anyone could kill him. Fortunately, Elector Fredrick hid Luther out in the Wartburg Castle

Would you have done what Luther did? Would you have challenged the highest authority on earth, and be willing to face excommunication and death? For the Christian, most persecution doesn't come from public writings like Luther, but from private acts like Daniel. What if you are at a dinner with other people, and normally, you pray before you eat. But tonight you're eating with people that aren't Christians, and aren't interested in becoming Christian. What would you do? Would you pray? If someone says to you, "I'm a good person and I'm sure God will take me to heaven." Would you interrupt and say, you and I are not good persons. We sin and deserve eternal punishment from God. If it weren't for Jesus, we'd be going to hell." Or, would you hide your faith?

We aren't good at Standing Up For Jesus and His Word. Look at how frightened many are today, about saying who we are voting for in the election? If you say you support the President, someone might throw a firebomb thru your window, or beat you up at an outdoor restaurant. We just don't like the idea of someone not liking us, or getting mad at us.

How good it is, that we have a God who forgives us. Our Savior Jesus Christ, is

the same God that Daniel and Luther prayed to. He doesn't punish us for our sins of weaknesses. He doesn't punish us for our shortcomings. Instead, Jesus Christ allowed himself to be killed on a cross, and this was his way of paying for our sins. And then he rose from the dead, proving that he really is our God, and that our sins really are forgiven. You are completely and totally forgiven for all the times you have covered up our faith. Christ has paid for that sin on the cross. And now, he gives you the strength to become more like Daniel and Luther, to live your Christian faith openly in your life.

Daniel did that. And, as a result, he was thrown into the lion's den. Luther, did that, and a contract was put out on his life. But here's where we learn our second lesson for today, and that lesson is this – as we serve God openly, he is watching and will protect us.

After throwing Daniel into the lion's den, the king couldn't sleep. His conscience wouldn't let him rest, because he knew that he had sentenced an innocent man to death. Early in the morning, the king ran to the lion's den, and found Daniel alive. Daniel said: "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions." God had been watching. "

After executing the enemies of Daniel, the king drafted a new decree, a new law. Here we see proof, again, that God was watching over this entire situation. Listen to what God caused this pagan king to write, in verse 26: "I decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel." The decree goes on to describe God as a living God, whose kingdom will last forever, who rescues and saves his people. This pagan king is describing Jesus Christ to a tee. How could such a chain of events happen? It doesn't make sense, until you realize that God was watching over the entire situation, and God was using these circumstances ultimately to glorify his name. Because of what happened, people all over the kingdom learned about the God of Daniel. People all over the kingdom heard this description of Jesus Christ, the God who saves, whose kingdom lasts forever.

Remember, though, that God is watching over everything that happens to you. Every conversation you have, every activity you're involved in. Look at Daniel – after it was all over, everyone knew about the true God. Perhaps through you, as you openly live your faith, someone else might learn about the true God who does so many amazing things on behalf of his people.

It is my prayer today that God would give to each of you the heart of Daniel and Luther. A heart that is courageous enough to stand up for the truth of God's Word, even when people are watching. A heart that trusts that God is watching, even when things look difficult. That is the heart of Daniel and Luther. May God bless you with that same heart. So then, Stand Up For Jesus! Amen.