

# The Old Time Gospel

## *The Good News Now*

# # 6

## *Living Above the Crowd*

Copyright 2010 - Certain Sound Publishing Corp.-Box 930314- Verona WI 53593 - <http://certainsoundpublishing.org>

### **Living Above The Crowd**

One of the most stirring passages in all of literature is Polonius's advice to Laertes in Shakespeare's Hamlet. Laertes has won his father's consent to leave Denmark for France. There seems to be a tug at the old man's heart, as he sees the young man eager to try his wings, to challenge the future. Perhaps, Polonius is haunted by memories of his own yesterdays. His council is warm with the wisdom of affection and experience. "Beware of entrance into a quarrel," he warns, "give every man thy ear, but few thy voice. Neither a borrower nor a lender be," he cautioned.

"Take each man's censure, but reserve judgment for thyself. And this above all, to thine own self be true, and it shall follow as the night the day, thou cannot be false to any man. Farwell, my blessing season this in thee." Laertes ventured into the future with noble guidance. Be true to yourself. Live above the crowd.

Polonius's desire that his son possess ethical congruence is admirable. For integrity is the city quo non of affective ministry in a missionary age. Someone once said, "What you do speaks so loudly I can't hear what you say." Edgar Gest, the poet, said, "I'd rather see a sermon, than hear it any day. I'd rather it should walk with me, than merely tell the way. The eyes are better pupils and more willing than the ears. Fine counsel is confusing, but example, always clear. And best of all the teachers are the ones who live their creed, for to see good put in action is what everybody needs."

Aristotle had his tri-pod of ethos pathos, and logos. If you're going to make an effective impact. If you're going to persuade, Logos, of course, is reasoned argument. Pathos, the emotions we engender, but ethos is absolutely critical; character excellence. And without ethos we cannot make the impact that God deserves us to. We see it in the examples of televangelist's and political leaders who are caught, detoured by some moral deviancy. And even though the pathos remains the same, and even though the logos remains the same, they are like Sampson shorn, without the moral authority of ethos.

I present today, a man who was true to himself; a man who lived above the crowd – Daniel. Daniel 1:8 states: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Daniel 1:9-12 "Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink."

Daniel was taken as a prisoner of war when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah in 606 BC. Nebuchadnezzar was a shrewd practitioner. He took not only the treasures of the temple, but he took young people, the children of

the nobles, knowing that if I have them in Babylon, I will be able to keep rein on the puppet ruler who remains behind. Moreover, I will take these teenagers, I will change their names, I will give them a new language, Aramaic, I will train them in the sciences of Babylon. They will study at the Univ. of Babylon, and eventually I will be able to send them back home to keep things the way I would like them to be.

We have every reason to believe that most of the young people went along with Nebuchadnezzar's scheme. They ate his food, they drank his wine, but Daniel decided to be true to himself, to live above the crowd, to make an impact upon that pagan generation. We talk about a missionary age; what a missionary challenge Daniel had. And as you read the book, you will recall he made such an impact that at one time Nebuchadnezzar said everybody better worship Daniel's God, or be thrown into the fiery furnace. He made an impact on his age. By the life he lived, Daniel caused people to ask the same question that Peter talked about, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Peter 2:1 What practices enabled Daniel to live above the crowd?

Practice No. 1. Daniel resolved to stay on the right path. He purposed in his heart. Daniel knew that the food had been offered to idols. Daniel knew that there was some lobster and catfish on the menu. He knew that Leviticus 11 & Deuteronomy 14 says that should be on a hit list. And so Daniel said, "I am going to stand up for my God, no matter what it takes. I'm going to stay on the right path.

Purpose – something that you set up as an aim. You must make up your mind in advance. "The prudent sees the evil and hides himself." Proverbs 22:3.

And what should be the purpose of Christian preachers who want to make an impact in a missionary age?

Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God? Our blessed Lord taught us to pray; "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The kingdom of God comes to each of us when the will of God is done in our lives. When we are in the circle of God's will. Sometimes being in the circle of God's will means that you're not going to be the great preacher you dreamed of.

Sometimes you must be like Noah, and preach for a century and only be able to baptize your family. The point is, we must be satisfied to be in the will of God, and to play the roles, or the part, that God intends for us to play. And that is easier said than done.

Walking in right paths. Plato describes the human will as a charioteer with two headstrong horses, each pulling in the opposite direction.

Paul cried out in Romans 7:9, "The good that I would do, I do not." I can identify with that. One poet declared, "There's a little bit of bad in the best of us, and a little bit of good in the worst of us, so it behooves the best of us, not to talk about the rest of us."

There is a civil war going on inside each of us. But I'm so glad that to pursue right paths, I don't have to do it in my own strength.

2Corinthians 5:21 "God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus."

When I look at myself, I don't feel very satisfied with my Christian growth, I look to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and know that I am covered by His imputed and imparted righteousness. I lose my trepidation and anxiety because I know that when God looks at my life, He says, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." I then resolve to stay in right paths.

Practice No. 2. Receive God's favor for fidelity.

Daniel 1:9 says, "And God brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs."

We've got to interact with people who do not know our Savior Jesus Christ. We need the Holy Spirit to break down barriers and open doors. And the power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when we are covered by His righteousness extends to us a favor.

Proverbs 12:2 says, "A good man receives favor from God."

Psalms 5:12 says, "The righteous are surrounded by a shield of God's favor."

The military talks about strategic shields, but I'd rather have the shield and favor of My Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ than any shield the military technology might have to offer.

Psalms 84:11 says, "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

Psalms 37:4 says, "Delight thyself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." And so the favor of God is there for us.

Psalms 106:46 "He made them to be pitied of them that carried them captive." They received the favor of God.

Our Lord had favor. Luke 2:52 says, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

Chaplain Barry Black tells the story: "I once had a boss, and before I went to the assignment, several people pulled me aside and said, 'This is not the most progressive gentleman, In fact, an individual with your paint job may not be very popular with this guy.' When I was introduced to him, someone said, 'Sir, this is chaplain Black.' His first words to me were, 'Your name is Black, and you are Black,' and I thought to myself, well at least he has 20 – 20 vision, but Lord, what am I getting myself into?"

But I stayed on my knees, and I tried to do my work, and 3 months after I was on the job, he called me in and had me standing at attention, and he looked at me with confusion on his face, and he said, 'I don't know why, I like you.' And I said, 'Well, I'll take that as a compliment sir.' And he said, 'That will be all.' And as I left, I thought to myself, 'I know why he likes me, my Savior Jesus Christ has covered me with a robe of His righteousness, and I am entitled to certain rights and privileges as a child of God.' He was surrounded by the shield of God's favor.

Practice No. 3. Expect your faith to be tested. Daniel 1:9 told us that Daniel had favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs, but then the prince says, "Daniel, I really would like to help you, but my head would be on the chopping block with Nebuchadnezzar . if you're not looking right. I want to do it, but I can't do it."

Now I know about prosperity religion. Name it and claim it, take it home and frame it. Call it and haul it...I understand that kind of religion, but brothers and sisters, we must expect our faith to be tested.

"Must I be carried through the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize, and sail through bloody seas." 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "There is no test that comes to you that is not common." Don't think of yourselves as unique. Others are going through the same thing.

Think of Elijah, trying to make an impact in a missionary age. Intrepid! when he stood up before the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, but a woman sent him running. Now, under the Juniper tree, with suicidal inclinations, he was afraid to take his own life, so he said, God, you do it. And when they began to dialogue, Elijah said, oh God, I am the only one left trying to serve you and make an impact in this missionary age.

Watch out when you have the Elijah complex. Expect vicissitudes; expect fiery trials!

2Timothy 3:12 says, “Yea, and all who live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.”

If you’re not experiencing vicissitudes, you better check up on your life.

Practice No. 4. Maintain a positive attitude.

Daniel positively reframed the challenge. “Give me a test.” Give me a vegetarian diet, pulse and water for ten days, and see.

Daniel did not walk around with a chip on his shoulder. One of the reasons we don’t make an impact on this missionary age, is because we are so negative as Christians. Daniel did not balk when they changed his name. He accepted his new language, Aramaic. He did not try to flunk out of the Univ. of Babylon, in fact, he graduated Summa cum laude.

Daniel 1:20 says that when Neb. tested him at the end of three years, “in all manner of wisdom, it was not two or three times, it was exponential, he was ten times better. Daniel maintained a positive Christian attitude.

Romans 12:21 says, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

I love Joseph. Naïve kid. Anytime you can’t see the homicidal inclinations of your brothers, that’s naivety.

Walking around with his coat of many colors; “I had a dream the other day fella’s. Can I tell you about it? We were in a field of sheaves of wheat, and they bowed down to my sheaf. Hey guys, I had another dream, would you like to hear about it? The young fellow was slow.

Daddy sends him off on a walk, and his brothers say, behold the dreamer comes. Come now, let us kill him and we will see what becomes of his dreams.

Brothers & Sisters, when you’ve got the Lord Jesus Christ living on the inside, how can you not be positive? Joseph went from the pit to Potipher’s house, but they couldn’t keep him down. The favor of God, he was in charge at Potipher’s house after a while. He went from Potipher’s house to the prison. The favor of God – he was running the prison. And the thing that amazes me – thrown in jail for attempted rape, he’s walking around in the jail with a positive attitude, he sees the butler and the baker talking, and he says, “Why are you sad today? I mean, it’s like they are at a party somewhere. The butler and the baker must have been saying to themselves, “what has he been smoking?”

And Joseph maintained a positive attitude, and had he not reached out to the butler and the baker, he would have altered the will of God, for God had a plan for him. Do you think He has one for you? Maintain a positive attitude.

I think about Naaman’s maid in 2Kings 5. A captive girl, who could have been angry, passive aggressive, I don’t do windows. But instead when she saw her master, a military man, had leprosy, she said, I know somebody who knows somebody who knows what to do for the General. Maintain a positive attitude.

The winds blow and the storms rise, but learn the contentment that Paul had, that was so beautifully described in the prison, even when chained between the guards. Maintain that attitude.

The final Practice, No. 5. Harness prayer power.

This is the motif through the book of Daniel. Daniel was a praying man. He had a career that spanned 7 decades. Talk about ministry in a missionary age. Babylon fell, Medo- Persia rose, and Daniel was still the head honcho. He ended up being the king of the presidents. You couldn't keep that man down. He was like the energizer bunny; he kept going and going.

Daniel was a man of prayer. When he needed an interpretation for Neb's dream, he prayed. And in chapter 6, his enemies used his prayer life. He prayed 3 times a day, and Daniel 6:10 says that when he knew that the writing was signed, he went in, with the shutters being open and prayed, as his custom was and gave thanks to God,

1Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you in Christ Jesus." Harness prayer power.

Jesus lived above the crowd. He resolved to stay on right paths. He said of his enemies in John 8:46, "which one of you can convict me of sin? Jesus lived above the crowd.

Our blessed Lord received God's favor. God was able to say to Him at His baptism, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Jesus expected to be tested and set His face like flint toward Jerusalem.

He maintained a positive attitude. He even made excuses for His disciples. He said, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." And on Calvary they drove the nails through His hands until the blood gushed out.

Jesus harnessed prayer power. As He entered the pool of suffering, He did so with prayer on His lips; "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." And His last words were, "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Brothers & Sisters, if we are going to make an impact on this earth, we must live above the crowd. And if we will do so, like Wm. Cullen Brian's peroration on Thanatopsis, we will be able to so live that when our summons comes to join the innumerable caravan, for each must take his place within the solemn holds of death, will go not like the quarry- slaves, scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust, and looking to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, we will be able to approach our grave as one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.