**“O KING, LIVE FOREVER” by Al Diestelkamp**

Try to imagine yourself in a situation where your nation has been overthrown by a foreign power, and you have been taken captive and forced into servitude to the very evil ruler who was responsible for this unwanted circumstance. What would be your attitude toward the one in power?

This was exactly the situation in which Daniel found himself from his youth through his old age. What should impress us is how this man of faith viewed the reigns of godless emperors as the result of God giving power “to whomever He chooses” (Dan. 4:25). Therefore, when addressing whoever was king, he would begin by saying, “O king, live forever!” (Dan. 2:4; 3:9; 5:10; 6:21). His respect was not dependent on the respectability of the rulers but was the result of the respect he had for the One Who had placed them in power.

Furthermore, Daniel’s respect was not mere lip service. He served with distinction in the administrations of the godless kings Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius. Even when Daniel’s faith in God was challenged, requiring him to obey God rather than men, he did not speak evil of the king who had sentenced him to the lion’s den but said, “O king, live forever!” (6:21).

Daniel’s respect toward those in authority was in agreement with principles outlined in the law of Moses which said, “ You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people” (Ex. 22:28). Solomon also warned, “Do not curse the king, even in your thought” (Eccl. 10:20).

Of course, it is important to note that Daniel, and other men of faith, did not participate in any evil, nor did they hesitate to rebuke rulers for their sins (i.e., Dan. 3:16-18; Mk. 6:18); but they evidently did so respectfully, considering the high regard the rulers gave in return (Dan. 2:48-49; Mk. 6:26).

This got me to consider my own attitude toward the men whom God has chosen to govern our nation. I realize that a democratic republic is quite different from other forms of government. This might make determining just who is included in “a ruler” more challenging, but it surely would include our presidents. In my lifetime, there have been fourteen men who have served as President of the United States. In my opinion, some have been more “respectable” than others. Yes, some of them were adulterers, liars, and approved of such things “worthy of death” (Rom. 1:32), but I wouldn’t trade any one of them for the likes of Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar.

There is no time in my memory when the divisions in our nation were more evident and the vitriolic attacks more vocal. (I wasn’t alive during the Civil War.) It is a time when Christians have the opportunity to *be like Daniel* by “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) while putting away “all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking…with all malice” (Eph. 4:31).

Christians should do all we can to expose evil and promote righteousness in our nation. This might include working and voting to elect honorable candidates who have respect for God’s Word; but when the votes are tabulated, we need to accept the results and show honor to those elected as ones “appointed by God” (Rom. 13:1). Peter wrote, “Honor the king” (1 Pet. 2:18). Though we don’t have a king in our nation, I suspect the Lord expects us to make the application anyway.

260 N. Aspen Dr., Cortland, IL 60112 • aldiestel@gmail.com