

Daniel 6:1-10
Be Thou Faithful Unto Death

NKJ Daniel 6:1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom;

2 and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss.

3 Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.

4 So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.

5 Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

6 So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever!"

7 "All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.

8 "Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

9 Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

Before I get down to talking about what is going on in these verses, let me ask you a question I'd like you to think about. ***How Important is Prayer to You?*** Is it so much a part of your life that the idea of not being able to do it for 30 days is more than you could bear? Now I'm not talking about saying grace before you eat, I'm talking about your daily personal communication with the Lord. Would an edict forbidding you to pray for 30 days affect you at all, *or would it merely be a command to continue in your current condition?*

Babylon has fallen to the Medo-Persian empire, Nabonidus has been deposed, Belshazzar is dead. One kingdom has fallen, another is now ascending. In time of course, Persia too will be swept away by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and so that vision that Nebuchadnezzar had in his dream of the statue with the head of Gold, the Chest of Silver, the Belly and thighs of Bronze and so on, is being played out. Just as God had promised the kingdoms of men are rising and falling as he has decreed.

Babylon may be gone, but Daniel remains, he goes on, symbolizing the perpetuity of God's kingdom which continues and will triumph, no matter what raging nations and conspiring rulers may do to try to destroy it. We are of course, reading about yet another attempt by the world and the Devil to do just that, but once again, despite all he can do, Daniel will be tested and found faithful and after the raging storm has passed will remain standing. But more about why that was in a moment.

Darius has come in and reorganized the administration of the Babylonian empire, he has divided it into 120 municipalities overseen by officials called Satraps. These Satraps in turn reported to Three Governors, who in turn reported to the king. The purpose of having all these governors and this three

level government was to introduce checks and balances (no America was not the first nation to discover the value of them) and to reduce corruption and graft. You see back then, if you were a conquered territory, you paid tribute to the person who had conquered you. In essence this was a tax that ensured that they didn't send the army in to conquer you all over again. Additionally you also got things like a legal system, law and order, protection from enemies and so on. But no there was no social security back then.

Now, what happened was the people paid their taxes to collectors, the collectors gave their revenues to the satraps, the satraps who oversaw the territory sent them on to the Governors who put them into the king's treasury. But you see there were tremendous opportunities for graft along the way. The king didn't know how much you'd actually collected, which is why he needed honest men along the way or he would suffer loss. Also, he needed wise and honest Satraps and Governors, or he might suffer loss through the rebellion of a misgoverned territory.

Darius had recognized the immense ability of Daniel, anyone reviewing the records of Babylon would have seen all his citations, and recognized that he was an able civil-servant. So he appointed Daniel to be one of the Governors. Daniel had so distinguished himself by his honesty, his ability and his industry, that the King is now thinking of elevating him to a position where he is above all the other officials and second only to Darius, kind of like the way Pharaoh elevated Joseph, making him second in the Kingdom.

Now why was Daniel so much better than the others? Because he had an MBA from Babylon Business school? No. There were other men who had gone through exactly the same kind of training and preparation for civil service and administration that Daniel had. What set Daniel apart was because as verse 3 puts it, *an excellent Spirit* was in him. More important than just his ability and acumen, Daniel had the Holy Spirit dwelling in him and conforming Him to the image of Christ. So Daniel, as he served his earthly masters, knew like Joseph had, that He was serving God. And so he was honest, and fair, and diligent, and self-sacrificing rather than self-serving.

Brothers and Sisters, brains and ability alone cannot make a good official or administrator. Dr. David Wells commented that the theological seminary where he teaches, Gordon Conwell, has been contacted repeatedly by famous secular business schools and they have been asked to send professors to teach their business students basic courses in ethics, because those schools found that their talented and bright young students have no idea why fraud and graft and corruption and theft and bribes are wrong.

Now, this proposal alarms the other officials to no end. Not only because of petty jealousy, but because if Daniel is over all of them, all of their own corruption is going to come under his scrutiny. So despite their own rivalries, they conspire to get rid of him, but no matter how much they search the records, they find he really is as squeaky clean as he seems. So what can they do to alienate him from the king? Well they can manufacture a conflict on religious grounds.

They know that as faithful as Daniel is in his governing, he is even more faithful to His God. Three times every Day, morning, noon, and evening. Daniel stops what he is doing and he goes and kneels down and talks to God. He had been doing that all his life, this wasn't vain repetition, it was the real communication that goes on between the Christian and his God. It was what David spoke of in Psalm **55:16 - 17** *As for me, I will call upon God, And the LORD shall save me.*

17 Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice.

And so the officials are going to play on the vanity of Darius. They go to him and they propose essentially an empire wide “loyalty test” – O king, please we think it would be wise if you would pass a decree that makes it illegal to petition anyone *except you* for an entire month.

And notice here that that is what they consider prayer to be, the petitioning of a higher authority whether it be a god or a man. I sometimes think that people today understand prayer less than these pagans did. In that for us, its less of actually asking for something than wishing for it. We consider asking our parents, or other human authorities something more real, but when we go to God that its not really a petition that he will answer yes, no, or wait to.

Q98: What is prayer?

A98: Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.

Well they get their request, and there is probably a certain amount of back slapping and congratulating one another, because they are sure that they can get Daniel with this. He prays three times a day, so that’s ninety opportunities to catch him in the act.

Daniel is one of the governors, he is aware what they are plotting, in fact Daniel we read in the beginning of verse 10: “*Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed*” what... what do we expect him to do? “*Well its only 30 days, I can take a sabbatical on prayer. I mean there are so many different ways I can serve the kingdom, it would be foolish for me to squander my power on this little act of devotion. Besides, I’m an old man now, I’ve earned a little slack time in the faith.*”

No, Daniel doesn’t do any of that, what does he do. He simply does what he has always been doing, trusting the God who has carried him through and praying. He doesn’t even lament this terrible situation in prayer, “oh Lord why have you allowed this to happen” – we read he actually *thanked God*. Now here is a man who believed in God’s sovereignty – *God you’ve ordered this, it must be for my good, you’ll see me through it – thank you.*

I want today to set two applications before you then.

The first is that even in times of persecution, we must continue profess Christ before the world, without wavering. When prayer became a capital crime in Persia, Daniel never even considered stopping praying, not even closing the window.

Jesus exhorting the church in Smyrna said this:

Rev. 2:10 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Not, I’m going to save you from suffering, but be faithful unto death even in the midst of it.

Now for us, the idea of Christian activities being a capital crime as it was in Smyrna, is difficult to conceive of. But it isn’t for your brothers and sisters in modern day Persia, that is Iran. Speaking recently Ahmadinejad said “*I will stop Christianity in this country,*” and even now Pastors and converts are in prison for the crime of loving Christ and refusing to stop telling others about him. One

Pastor, Hamid Pourmand, had a Daniel like deliverance from the death penalty, but will have to spend the next 3 years in jail.

Others though have been faithful unto death:

Ghorban Tori

His enemies used his faithfulness against him too

Then the secret police moved in

“Lord Jesus, please let me glorify your holy name in every moment of my life on this earth.

I am willing to give my life that belongs to you, for the sake of you and your church.”

I know you are probably thinking well, this isn't Iran, it's America –

Brittany McComb

This past spring, graduating senior Brittany McComb was chosen to give the valedictory speech at Foothill High School in Henderson, Nev., by virtue of achieving the highest GPA in the school. After composing her remarks, she submitted them to school administrators according to standard district policy. School administrators, with the advice of their district legal counsel, censored her speech, deleting all three Bible references, several references to “the Lord” and the only mention of the word “Christ.” On Thursday, June 15, 2006, McComb delivered her commencement address to over 400 fellow students, families and staff.

Chaplains

Do you love God more than anything else Enough that your enemies might know that they could trap you by it?

2nd Application, Why was it that Daniel had the strength to go on praying? Why was Ghorban willing to die for Christ? Love and Faith –

Daniel didn't stop praying because he would rather have died than stop talking to the God he loved. And he loved him because He had been given the gift of Faith, He loved God, he Believed his promises, and the most important of which was the promised Redeemer Jesus.

Daniel, like Job before him, Job 19:25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;

26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God,

27 Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

He knew what God's plans where regarding the coming of the Kingdom and the bringing in of redemption, he had read them in Isaiah and the other prophets and he had been shown a beautiful vision of the coming Christ:

Daniel 7:13 " I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.

14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.

Now if you don't know what its like to pray like Daniel, to have your feet on solid rock in the Storm, to Love God more than your life, and to know true peace and contentment come what may, I want to suggest it is probably because you haven't yet trusted that gracious Redeemer the Son of Man one who said ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."***

But it is not too late to start!