



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

# **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

---

Volume 13 Issue 32

August 17, 2014

## Truths for Bitter Providences, Part 5

I want to engage in a word-association exercise with you. What is the first thought that comes into your mind when I say:

- Leap? (frog)
- White? (black)
- Snow? (white or cold)
- Spring? (flowers)
- Daniel?

If you are like most in the church today, you probably thought, “Lion’s den!” And that is because by far this is the most well-known event in Daniel’s life. And that is a good thing.

Daniel 6 is the climax and close of the first half of the Book of Daniel. From this point forward, Daniel no longer endeavors to encourage the people of God with *personal anecdotes*. Daniel 7-12 contain a series of *prophetic encounters with the Lord* which, as with the first half of the book, were intended to encourage the people of God going through the most bitter of providences!

It is our privilege to examine another event in Daniel’s life, this one occurring when he was a very, very old man. The book of Daniel was the first book written completely in exile for an exiled people (B. 605 BC). As such it contains a series of messages to encourage the genuine child of God as they suffered under the judgment of God on account of the apostasy of their nation.

- The first message — chapter 1— answers the question, “What ought we to do now that we are in exile?” What was the answer given? Purpose within yourself to seek the Lord... honor the Lord... worship the Lord... trust the Lord! As we have seen, this has been the exhortation again and again throughout this book.
- The second message — chapters 2-12— answers the question, “What is there to encourage the child of God to seek the Lord in the valley of the shadow of death?”

Thus far we’ve seen four encouragements given NOT by Daniel BUT by the different kings of Babylon: “Be encouraged...

- *Your God is Great and so Rules Kings and Nations, Daniel 2.”*
- *Your God is Holy and therefore has a Plan that is beyond your ability to understand, Daniel 3.”*
- *Your God Reigns and so Holds the Heart of the King in His Hands, Daniel 4.”*
- *Your God is Jealous and so will not allow Himself- and so the Believer- to be Mocked, Daniel 5.”*

We have before us a fifth word of encouragement and this one given to us by Darius: *Be Encouraged! God’s Way is Infallible!*

### God’s Way is Infallible

Daniel 6:1-3: “It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they should be in charge of the whole kingdom, and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself [AGAIN] among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king

planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.”

We have seen this scenario before. This is exactly what happened when Daniel first served under Ashpenaz, and then Nebuchadnezzar, and then Belshazzar, and now Darius! From this consider a most important truth: kings come and go, nations come and go, crises come and go, but the work of the Lord/the service of the Lord will last forever! Sinclair Ferguson put it this way:

Another king comes with another kingdom; kingdoms rise and fall but Daniel, the symbol of the kingdom of God, remains. He has seen Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar come and go. Now Darius the Mede has arrived, and Daniel is still serving the King of kings. (Ferguson, 1988, p. 115)

And so it will be in our lives! This providence and that providence comes and goes, but the Kingdom of God and our place in that kingdom will never change!

We must take up the issue of the identity of Darius, of which there is no mention in secular literature at the time! In fact, Persian records say that Cyrus II was the king that conquered the Babylonians and Scripture itself bears that out (2 Chronicles 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–8; 3:7; 4:5; 5:13–6:14; Isaiah 45:1). So what do we do with this passage? There are two very plausible responses/explanations:

- It is possible that “Darius the Mede” was the name of the governor whom Cyrus placed over Babylon upon its conquest. While the governor’s name in Persian records is “Gobryas” there is a possibility that Darius is one and the same. Personally I think this is a stretch, but that is just my opinion.
- A more probable explanation — the one that I hold to — is that “Darius” and “Cyrus” are one and the same (Darius being a throne name like “Pul” as in the case of Tiglath Pileser).<sup>1</sup>

Daniel 6:28, “So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

By itself this is an odd way to end this chapter, wouldn’t you say? Daniel ends with a summary statement in which, out of the middle of nowhere, he references Cyrus. At best this is awkward which is why liberals suggest that the compiler of Daniel had two different stories that he combined into one here! And yet, all “awkwardness” is alleviated when we take into account a grammatical tool used in the Bible called “Epexegetis.”

Epexegetis is a literary tool in which words or phrases are added in writing to clarify a statement that was just made. For example:

- In his book, “The Wolf on Wall Street,” Jordan Belfort wrote, “But the fact remains that we would cooperate only if the alleged crime is a penal offense, or, as you would say it,

a felony.” In this example, the latter expression explains the former. That is what is known as Epexegetis.

- This literary tool is used throughout the Bible. For example:

Amos 3:11, “Therefore, thus says the Lord God, ‘An enemy, even one surrounding the land, will pull down your strength from you...’”

The Hebrew here simply is “An enemy and one surrounding the land...” But that doesn’t read well. Accordingly, the New American Standard translators translate the copula as “even” (or “that is” or “namely”) such that the latter expression explains the former, “An enemy, even/namely one surrounding the land...”

Speaking of the Messiah, he would be this according to Zechariah:

Zechariah 9:9b: “...humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Again the word for “even” is the word “and.” However, because the latter phrase clearly explains the former, the “and” is properly translated as “even/namely” This is clearly the construction at the end of Daniel 6, “So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius that is in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” Taken as epexegetis, the verse indicates that Darius and Cyrus were one and the same!

With that, consider the historical transition that occurred from the Babylonian rule to the Persian rule. When this transition was made, Cyrus (age 62) reorganized his kingdom. He sectioned it into 120 districts which was to be overseen by a governor (satrap). Over these 120 districts, he appointed three presidents (commissioners). This was necessitated by virtue of the vastness of the Persian Empire. Not only did this country take control of the lands that Babylon occupied, but Persia extended their territory into Libya and Egypt to the west and the Indus River and the Aral Sea to the east! To govern such a territory would have required the order we read about here!

Daniel was one of those three presidents. Now as Daniel had been richly endowed by the Spirit of the Lord, not only with faith and the gift of prophecy but also with great wisdom he excelled, and soon eclipsed the other two presidents. This of course would not have rested well with the two other regional overseers. Accordingly they kept an eye on Daniel and conferred regularly as to his status (the language here speaks of “collusion and conspiracy”). When it was discovered that Daniel was going to be promoted over them, they looked for a way to discredit Daniel before Darius. BUT this is where the problem began; they couldn’t find any cause for accusation against Daniel! *As an example of how a child of God ought to endure a bitter providence, Daniel was one who was wholly devoted to Christ!*

The Threatening Law

Daniel 6:5-6a, "Then these men said, 'We shall not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him with regard to the law of his God.' Then these commissioners and satraps [which would have been 122 people] came by agreement to the king [literally, they "thronged before him" seeking to move him NOT with integrity, BUT the force of numbers] and spoke to him as follow..."

Because these men couldn't find an area with which to charge Daniel, they conceived an incredibly wicked plan. They would use Daniel's very own religion against him! This is important! How many in the exile would suffer on account of their religion and so their devotion to Christ?

During the persecution that arose prior to the Maccabean revolt, the Seleucids used the Sabbath laws against God's people. They attacked the Jews on the Sabbath knowing that the devout Jew would not lift a sword to defend himself because they thought this broke God's law. This has frequently happened throughout redemptive and Church History. God's people suffering greater harm because they follow God!

That is what these men decided to do! They are going to use Daniel's devotion to God to trip him up! And an occasion for such a conflict was easily found. Together the two presidents and all the governors went to Darius and proposed that he enact a law that for thirty days no prayers were to be made in any religion except to the king. In that culture, the king was the representative of divinity.

From a secular point of view, this actually wasn't a bad idea. When a new regime took power in the ancient world, there always was a need for consolidation and the proof of power. Such an act on the part of Darius therefore would have served that end. Yet there is a caveat that is important to note. This decision was to be enacted as a "law of the Medes and the Persians." The "law of the Medes and the Persians" was a bragging right amongst the Medes/Persians which placed any such law above the king.

From one perspective, the "Law of the Medes and Persians" was an incredible law since in the ancient days kings were thought to be above the law. So in that sense, this was good. However, there could be a downside! Without the understanding that behind every lawful ordinance is "justice, mercy, and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23), such a standard could lead to the oppression of men which clearly would be the case here.

As to the ordinance to pray to Darius exclusively for a period of thirty days, heathen nations/peoples would not have found this to be a problem. As a supposed-descendant of the gods, the king was understood to be the representative of divinity. Accordingly, for the people of the land to cease praying to their individual gods for a time, the absolute dominion of the Persian empire and religious system would have been confirmed.

Yet this was a huge mistake on the part of the conspirators! The focus and theme of Daniel 2-5 was the absolute sovereignty of God over King, Nations, all things. Yet these Persian officials

attacked that here, which once again raises the question, “Will God allow His people to be punished because they serve Him?”

### Daniel’s “Transgression,”

Daniel 6:10, “Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.”

It is interesting to note that the architecture of the east at this time included elevated, yet small windows in upper rooms as a protection against heat and robbers respectively; there was often a wooden lattice-work in place of glass which would both let in a breeze, but obscure the view of any who might seek to gaze into the window. Accordingly, for these men actually to witness Daniel praying, it would have taken much effort!

That being said, this is one of my favorite verses in Daniel! Daniel was taken into captivity as a youth in 605 B.C. This passage occurred somewhere in the vicinity of 535 B.C. That means that the prayer/worship that Daniel offered on the day that Darius/Cyrus signed the decree was something he had been doing for 70 years! I love the words of Spurgeon in relation to Daniel and the lions; he said:

It is a good thing the lions didn't try to eat Daniel. They never would have enjoyed him, because he was 50 percent grit and 50 percent backbone. (Jeremiah, 1992, p. 125)

Truly, Daniel’s faith was not defined by great acts of service, but small ones consistently carried out over the years!

From this we behold a most important and yet wonderful truth! If placed under a microscope, it would be discovered that great acts of devotion and service to the Lord actually are comprised of hundreds of smaller and seemingly insignificant choices arising from love and devotion to the Lord. The text before us is endeavoring to emphasize this fact. On the surface it might be amazing that Daniel did what he did; the decree is signed and Daniel is defying it! But Daniel clearly here is indicating that it wasn’t amazing! His praying after the decree was signed was not an act of courage, but faithfulness- that which “...he had been doing previously!” Because Daniel had been doing this previously for 70 years there was little drama for him to continue this godly act of devotion! Speaking of another great act of devotion, Sinclair Ferguson wrote this:

Such heroism does not develop overnight, nor is it created in a vacuum. It is the mature fruit of lives and characters that have been forged by experience, by the tests and trials of the providence of God, and by faithfulness and obedience to Him. Present heroism cannot be explained apart from past faithfulness. (Ferguson, 1988, pp. 23-24)

## The Accusation

Daniel 6:11-12a, “Then these men came by agreement [by this Daniel is emphasizing the sinister nature of these adversaries] and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king’s injunction, ‘Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions’ den?’...”

These men clearly are taking their life into their own hands! They are manipulating Darius and forcing his hand! And so, after getting the king to repeat the terms to which he agreed when he signed the decree of vv. 7-8, the two presidents’ pressed their case against Daniel! Yet Darius wasn’t going to yield to their power without a fight. It is clear he sees now that their previous encouragement was NOT to solidify his power, BUT to manipulate and abuse it, and so the king fought against their sedition.

Daniel 6:14, “Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set *his* mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him.”-

The struggle was for naught for in the background the seditious work of the other “presidents” continued.

Daniel 6:15, “Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, ‘Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed.’”

Darius was trapped with no option; he had to execute Daniel, the politicians had won! But that brings us to a surprising vigil.

## A Surprising Vigil

Daniel 6:16-18, “Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions’ den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, ‘Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.’ And a stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing might be changed in regard to Daniel [many point out that this is reminiscent of the stone rolled in front of Christ’s tomb]. Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.”

After Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den, the door was shut and sealed so that no one could attempt a rescue. Yet the king did not spend that night in his usual fashion: eating, drinking, being merry, etc. Instead, the king fasted and lay awake on his bed!

This is crazy! Of all the concerns of state that faced the king that day (including the gross acts of the politicians he just witnessed), the most pressing and burdensome was that of the welfare of a child of God! Again let us not miss the important truth we that in Christ, we win! Whether we die in a blazing fire or are delivered, God is always looking out for us! Accordingly, seek Him; love Him; serve Him!

Daniel, 6:19-20, "Then the king arose with the dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den. And when he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?'" - the next morning after a long night upon his bed, Darius went to the lion's den and had the stone removed. He then weakly called from it, "Daniel are you alive? Has your God delivered you?"

What a great question! What always is the answer when it comes to the child of God? And before you respond, let me remind you of a couple of glorious truths.

Colossians 1:13-14, "He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

So has God delivered you from THE lion's mouth? Based on this passage, we would say, "Yes!" In fact, because it is so absolute, listen to how Paul can speak in Romans 8.

Romans 8:30, "...whom [God] predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

Our deliverance in Christ is so certain, Paul could speak of it in the past tense! So Daniel "has your God delivered you?" Whether he had been eaten or protected, the answer would have been yes which brings us to Daniel's vindication.

### Daniel's Vindication

Daniel, 6:21-23, "Then Daniel spoke to the king, 'O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.' [Once again, as an example to the other exiles, Daniel calls all God's people in the crucible to labor to serve the Lord!!] Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God."

I hope you see that it is by faith that the mouths of lions are shut (Hebrews 11:33)! Yet I also hope you see that that was by faith that men were sawn in two (Hebrews 11:37-38)! What is the point? Faith did not save Daniel; God did! Faith simply is the route/path by which God deigns to deliver! And so the focus here is NOT the faith of Daniel, BUT the faithfulness of God



to the man of faith!

In light of this consider another amazing point, Darius was preoccupied for an entire night over the welfare of one Jewish man; again pretty incredible! Yet consider: God in His greatness was preoccupied and continues to be preoccupied with the welfare of all His children today, tomorrow, and forever! Darius was preoccupied for one night and we are amazed! Yet the King of kings has been and continues to be preoccupied with you; amazement falls short of what ought to be our response!

Daniel 6:24, “The king then gave orders [not surprisingly], and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children, and their wives into the lions’ den;<sup>2</sup> and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.”

Here we see the type of the death that awaits this world on account of their sin. Truly, “broad is the road that leads to destruction” whole families can enter into it all at once! And so the story continues that by aiming at Daniel, these men struck a blow against the King and we’re not talking about Darius here! Accordingly, Darius who is called the “servant of God” (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1) executed the King’s/God’s judgment.

### The Glory of God Realized and Proclaimed

Daniel 6:25-27, “Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* language who were living in all the land: ‘May your peace abound! I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion *will be* forever. He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has *also* delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.’”

The message that Darius/Cyrus sent out to his nation sounds like a broken record. Isn’t this the conclusion to which Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar were brought? Once again God turned the heart of the king to the place where he acknowledged the sovereignty, power, and glory of the Lord God Almighty (cf. Proverbs 21:1)! *What an encouragement for a pilgrim people!* Yes the theocracy was gone. But in Christ, the Lord continues to rule over the great and small things of life! And yet, the overriding theme of this chapter (derived from v. 5) brings us to another important truth that God gave His people through Daniel: God’s way and so His word is Infallible!

What does this mean... infallible? How is it different from “inerrant”? We tend to use the two terms together. Inerrancy means without error; infallibility means unable to error. What is the difference?

In answering this let us first recognize an important distinction. Of the two, infallibility is the

more amazing one. A third grader can take a spelling test and score 100%- that is inerrancy. But that same third grader could never score on his spelling tests 100% infallibly. Eventually he is going to make a mistake.

With this distinction, when we speak of the Inerrancy of Scripture we say that the word of God as originally given in their original manuscripts had no errors! There is not a mistake in God's word! Now that truly is amazing, especially when you consider that the word of God was written

- Over a 1,500 year span.
- Over 40 generations.
- By over 40 authors from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, etc...
- In a variety of places: the wilderness, a dungeon, a palace, while travelling...
- In the rigors of a military campaign.
- During times of war and peace.
- During moods of joy and despair.
- On three continents!
- In three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic (ex. Daniel 2-7), and Greek.

And yet when analyzed, it speaks with amazing UNITY and CONFORMITY on hundreds of controversial subjects about which there are hundreds of opposing opinion! How is this possible? It is possible because it is inerrant! That's quite amazing!

Yet what is even more amazing is that because it is Infallible, we will never err if we follow it! In other words, bad people can't harm you if you follow it!

Now, does this mean that if we follow God's word bad things won't happen to us? We'll always enjoy ease of days? Absolutely not! Again, read Hebrews 11 and the many ways God's people following God have been killed! Then what does infallibility mean? As it pertains to that which we call real, lasting, eternal, we shall never error/be led astray if we follow God's word!

- Daniel could have physically died in the lion's den (just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in their fiery furnace)! But that is all!
- You say, "What else is there?" Your soul!!! Your destiny!!! Eternity!!!- all of which are a billion times more important than your physical life!!!!

Matthew 20:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul [and so, do not fear earthly rulers, bad guys, Satan]; but rather fear Him [God] who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

With this, Daniel stands as a testimony and so a road sign which heralds the security of God's people and so the Infallibility of God's Plan! If we follow God, even though worldlings might

endeavor to use truth/God's word/God's Plan against us, they will ultimately be frustrated! For the path on which we travel- though at times it leads through the valley of the shadow of death- ends in our co-reigning with Christ in His Kingdom forever! With this Sweet Truth ever before us, we joyfully and confidently can enter into the Bitter Providences of life!

## Bibliography

Ferguson, S. B. (1988). *The Preacher's Commentary – Volume 21, Daniel*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishig.

Jeremiah, D. (1992). *The Handwriting on the Wall*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

## End Note(s)

<sup>1</sup> Dual names for kings at this time was not unheard of: Tiglath Pileser III (745–727 BC) ruled as king of Babylon from 729 as Pul; his son Shalmaneser V ruled in Babylon under the name Ululai.

<sup>2</sup> This is another time indicator for this book. At this time, it was a practice in Persia to condemn whole families on account of the guilt of one member!

## VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10<sup>th</sup> Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. The web address for all sermons at Bethel Presbyterian Church can be found out as follows: <http://bethelpresbyterian.sermonaudio.com>

## About the Preacher

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on August 17, 2014. Greg is the minister of Bethel Presbyterian Church