



Sunday School Lesson
Daniel 6:1-28
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**Faith and
 the Duties of a Citizen**



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In this final study of episodes in the life of Daniel we come to perhaps the best know narrative: Daniel in the lions' den. Every Bible student who attended Vacation Bible School as a youngster knows this story from heart. A [Goggle internet search](#) for "Daniel and the lions' den" yielded 25,300 hits. Three interest-

ing web sites worthy of mention include one containing a crossword puzzle on Daniel 6 (http://sewhttkr.home.comcast.net/bibleWS/bibleWS/47_daniel.htm), another containing a quiz on Dan. 6 (http://quiz.christiansunite.com/Famous_Stories/Daniel_in_the_Lion's_Den.shtml), and most interestingly a Jewish children's song on Dan. 6 (<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/dovecot/SongPages/DanInLionsDen.htm>). Is there anything important to learn now as adults from this story? I suspect there's much to be gleaned, even if it's just to refresh one's memory of the details of this important Bible story.

I. Context

Once more context plays an important role for accurate understanding of this passage. The external history was treated in the first study on Daniel and the reader is referred to the posting of [that lesson](#) under [Bible Studies: Old Testament](#) at Cranfordville.com for the details.

a. Historical

One of the dilemmas posed by Daniel six is chronology. The story is cast during the reign of Darius (6:1) and then concludes (6:28) with a reference to Cyrus the Persian following the reign of Darius the Mede. The problem is that ancient historical documents, which are very reliable,

B.C.E.	EGYPT	PALESTINE	MESOPOTAMIA
		THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE	BABYLONIA
		Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), 3 mos., 598-597 First Deportation to Babylonia, 597 Zedekiah (Mattaniah), 597-587	Nebuchadrezzar, 605-562
	Apries (Hophra), 589-570	FALL OF JERUSALEM SECOND DEPORTATION, 587	
		BABYLONIAN EXILE Ezekiel, c. 593-573	
		(<i>Second Isaiah</i> , c. 540) Edict of Cyrus, 538	Nabonidus, 556-539 (his son: Belshazzar) RISE OF PERSIA Cyrus II, 550-530 Defeat of Media, c. 550 Invasion of Lydia, c. 546 FALL OF BABYLON, 539
		THE EMPIRE OF PERSIA	
	Conquest by Persia 525	THE RESTORATION JUDAH Return of exiles Rebuilding of Temple, 520-515 (<i>Haggai</i>) (<i>Zechariah</i>)	Cambyses, 530-522 Darius I, 522-486
		(<i>Malachi</i> , c. 500-450)	
	Egypt under Persian rule, 525-401	Ezra's mission, 458 (?) Nehemiah arrives, 445 Ezra's mission, c. 428 (?)	Persia Xerxes I (Ahasuerus), 486-465 Artaxerxes I (Longimanus), 465-424 Xerxes II, 423 Darius II, 423-404
600 to 500			
500 to 400			
		Ezra's mission, c. 398(?)	Artaxerxes II (Mnemon), 404-358 Artaxerxes III, 358-338 Arses, 338-336 Darius III, 336-331

reverse that sequence. To further complicate matters, the Greek text of Daniel (the LXX) apparently recognizes this and attempts in some of the manuscript traditions to correct it, although in different ways. Paul M. Lederach, in “Daniel,” *Believer’s Church Bible Commentary* (iPreach) has one of the more helpful summations of the issue here:

The identity of Darius is one of the problems of the book. How is he to be fitted into Persian chronology? A possible answer is that Darius is another name, possibly a throne name, for Cyrus. More plausibly, Darius is Gubaru (Gobyras), who ruled over Mesopotamia as vice-regent under Cyrus. Records show that Gubaru was appointing governors until his death eight months later (ANET: 306). [Cyrus, p. 284.] Some have questioned the number of satraps (governors), each ruling a satrapy or a province. Some fifty years later, under Xerxes (486-465 B.C.), the number of provinces was reported to be 127 (Esther 1:1; cf. 8:9). According to the Greek historian Herodotus and tomb inscriptions, nearer to the time of our story, the number of satrapies ranged between 20 and 29, and they were subdivided into provinces. That such numbers fluctuated under different administrations is not particularly surprising. The biblical comment reflects in general what is known from other sources about the organization of the Persian empire (see notes on historical factuality at 5:1-4).

This issue remains in tension without a decisive answer that can satisfy the existing data. Thus an exact determination of the time frame for this event remains elusive.

b. Literary

The literary genre (form) of this story is a subject of considerable discussion. One helpful discussion is that by W. Sibley Towner, “Daniel,” *Interpretation Commentary* (iPreach), who calls it a court tale of conflict. His schematizing of the internal structure is insightful:

Perhaps this can be illustrated by diagramming the architecture of the tale as follows, showing its balanced structure and identifying the moment at which Daniel is determined to have triumphed in the conflict as the high point of the story.

Daniel emerges as best satrap

His enemies plot

The king makes a fatal decree

Devout Daniel is arrested and sentenced to death

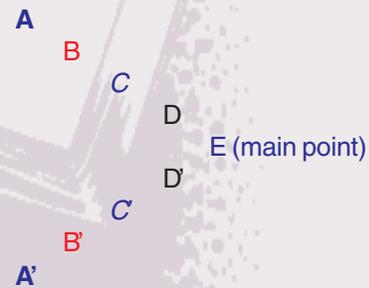
DANIEL DELIVERED—GOD WINS!

Daniel released

The king makes a saving decree

The enemies are destroyed

Daniel confirmed as best satrap



The above pattern is based on ancient Jewish use of chiasmic thought structure, and is likely a correct assessment of the thought flow in chapter six. The numbering of the above lines is my insertion in order to bring out more clearly what Towner is suggesting.

One other literary concern has to do with the relationship of this story to the one in chapter three about Daniel’s three friends in the fiery furnace. This connection is highlighted by Heb. 11:33-34, which links them together (NRSV): “32 And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, **shut the mouths of lions**, 34 **quenched raging fire**, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.” Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “The Book of Daniel,” vol. 8, *New Interpreter’s Bible* (iPreach) quotes John Goldingay’s comparison:

Goldingay suggests a systematic comparison:

Introduction	6:2-9	3:1-7
First Part	10-19	8-23
Second	20-25	24-27
Conclusion	26-29	28-33

Other scholars have made observations about further similarities, as well as pointing out the significant differences between the two stories.

Both point to dramatic intervention by God to rescue Israelites in captivity. An obvious heroic quality runs as a common thread between both stories. The triumph of good over evil is a common element also. Additionally, many modern commentators as well as ancient ones call attention to the similarity of these two stories to martyr stories, particularly with the willingness of both Daniel and his three friends to die for

their faith. In these two instances, God delivered them from such a fate, although in the vast majority of instances such deliverance doesn't take place, e.g., the story of Jesus. Thus we can learn much from both chapter three and chapter six in Daniel about courage and boldness when our religious faith and its practice is called into question, especially by powerful individuals.

II. Message

Taking our clue from Sibley Towner's organization discussed above, we will follow a threefold division of the text study of Daniel 6: (1) The Conspiracy (vv. 1-9); (2) Daniel's Passion (vv. 10-18); (3) The Deliverance (vv. 19-28).



a. The Conspiracy (vv. 1-9)

NASB

1 It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, 2 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. 3 Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom. 4 Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or *evidence of corruption*, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was *to be found* in him. 5 Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him with regard to the law of his God."

6 Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever! 7 "All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the sa-

NRSV

1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred twenty satraps, stationed throughout the whole kingdom, 2 and over them three presidents, including Daniel; to these the satraps gave account, so that the king might suffer no loss. 3 Soon Daniel distinguished himself above all the other presidents and satraps because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king planned to appoint him over the whole kingdom. 4 So the presidents and the satraps tried to find grounds for complaint against Daniel in connection with the kingdom. But they could find no grounds for complaint or any corruption, because he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption could be found in him. 5 The men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

6 So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict,

NLT

1 Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces, and he appointed a prince to rule over each province. 2 The king also chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the princes and to watch out for the king's interests. 3 Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and princes. Because of his great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire. 4 Then the other administrators and princes began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling his affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize. He was faithful and honest and always responsible. 5 So they concluded, "Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the requirements of his religion."

6 So the administrators and princes went to the king and said, "Long live King Darius! 7 We administrators, prefects, princes, advisers, and other officials have unanimously agreed that Your Majesty should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days

traps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den. 8 "Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.

anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human – except to Your Majesty – will be thrown to the lions. 8 And let Your Majesty issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, a law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 So King Darius signed the law.

Comments:

In this initial segment, the stage is set for the story. First we are informed of the organizational structure of Darius' empire: 120 provincial governors, with them answering the one of three superiors, who then answer directly to the king. Ancient documents outside the Old Testament indicate that such an elaborate structure did not take place until much later than the Daniel narrative assumes, but that Darius was known as an organizing ruler. Daniel distinguished himself as the most influential one among the three top officials.

Jealously followed and a plot to get rid of him was developed by the other officials. George A. F. Knight, "The Book of Daniel," *The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible* (iPreach) has some helpful insights on this:

Anyone who advances above his fellows, however great his merit, is likely to arouse jealousy. To this may be added the hatred which sheer goodness provokes in those who prefer darkness rather than light. Dan.'s being a foreigner would of course aggravate the resentment, though the author refrains from mentioning such prejudice. Thus the presidents and satraps submerge their individual rivalries in an alliance to destroy the common object of their envy. Having searched in vain for any fault in his administration that might be magnified and distorted into a ground for complaint, they conclude that his belonging to a religious minority is the one chink in his armor.

To be added to this should be Daniel's integrity and consistency, especially in his religious devotion. If a way could be found to put conflict between Daniel's duties as a Babylonian officer and his religious duties, then they could bring him down. A classic church-state issue was created.

The answer for these opponents of Daniel lay in appealing to the ego of the king. Again Knight has helpful comments on verses six through nine:

6:6-7. The Aramaic word translated *came by agreement* (vss. 6, 11, 15) and its related Hebrew forms (Pss. 2:1a; 55:14b; 64:2b) are of uncertain meaning. That even high officials would dare throng tumultuously (see RSV footnote) into the royal court seems unlikely. The RSV translators' interpretation of collusion or conspiracy is based on comparison of the several contexts. Thus the envious officers scheme to approach the king together and play on his vanity to obtain his thoughtless assent to an absurd interdict they are certain Dan. will violate. Their proposal has the effect of elevating the king to the status of a god to whom all his subjects must pray, and to the book's original readers it would suggest at once the pretensions to divinity of Antiochus Epiphanes.

6:8-9. The phrase law of the Medes and the Persians suggests that the author may have supposed that the Persians were included in the Median Empire (cf. 5:28; 8:20), which historically took in Elam to the S and extended N and W into Armenia and Asia Minor but never established rule over the Persians to the E. On the other hand the meaning may be that these neighboring peoples independently followed a legal code that was a common heritage. The idea that a decree issued under this law could not be revoked is found also in Esth. 1:19; 8:8 (see comments), where, as here, it is an essential element in the story. Historical records of the 2 empires reveal no evidence of unusual legal practice on which such a tradition might be based.

Now the applicational question: How does this relate to today? Anyone who has ever worked in government, educational institutions, a large company etc. knows all too well the likelihood of jealousy and

plotting to “take a person down.” We even see it happening in church life. In most instances in our world, the intent is not to have a person killed, but rather just demoted or fired from a job. This is the dark side of Daniel 6 that usually gets glossed over in children’s story versions, but is a major point of continuing interests by adults in this story. Daniel found himself in a situation all too familiar to many of us today: people we work with hate us and want to destroy us. I’ve experienced this more times than I care to remember as both a pastor and a seminary professor. I’ve seen some of it at GWU as well. But my case is not unique by any stretch of the imagination; rather, it’s more the norm, and not the exception.

One fascinating aspect of this story in Daniel is that his enemies knew him well enough to know that they could succeed in their plot only by finding a way to pit his job duties against his religious devotion. Here is where the story challenges all of us. Way too often when we face opposition in the work place, it’s because some success has come about by running rough shod over other people or by some other means of getting ahead that we have used. Daniel challenges us to be so committed to our God that people instinctively know that no matter what amount of pressure is applied to us we will not compromise our devotion to God in any way. Much too often Christians in the work place, when confronted with a choice to either serve God or do their job, will choose the latter and find ways to justify the compromise of their faith.

b. Daniel’s Passion (vv. 10-18)

NASB

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. 11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. 12 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?" The king replied, "The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." 13 Then they answered and spoke before the king, " Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."

14 Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was

NRSV

10 Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously. 11 The conspirators came and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. 12 Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human, within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." 13 Then they responded to the king, "Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day."

14 When the king heard the charge, he was very much distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun

NLT

10 But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God. 11 The officials went together to Daniel's house and found him praying and asking for God's help. 12 So they went back to the king and reminded him about his law. "Did you not sign a law that for the next thirty days anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human – except to Your Majesty – will be thrown to the lions?" "Yes," the king replied, "that decision stands; it is a law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." 13 Then they told the king, "That man Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, is paying no attention to you or your law. He still prays to his God three times a day."

14 Hearing this, the king was very angry with himself for signing the law, and he tried to find a way to save Daniel. He spent the rest of the day looking for a way to get Daniel out of this predicament.

deeply distressed and set *his* mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him. 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."

16 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." 17 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 would be changed in regard to Daniel. 18 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.

went down he made every effort to rescue him.

15 Then the conspirators came to the king and said to him, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed." 16 Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!" 17 A stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. 18 Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

15 In the evening the men went together to the king and said, "Your Majesty knows that according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, no law that the king signs can be changed." 16 So at last the king gave orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to him, "May your God, whom you worship continually, rescue you." 17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed the stone with his own royal seal and the seals of his nobles, so that no one could rescue Daniel from the lions. 18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting. He refused his usual entertainment and couldn't sleep at all that night.

Comments:

Once Daniel's enemies had succeeded in getting the king to sign a decree requiring everyone to pray to him as divine for thirty days, the plan was then in place and they knew they could count on Daniel's religious devotion to disregard such a law. Verses ten through eighteen focus on Daniel and the king. Three sub-segments of the text can be noted by the three paragraphs in the above translations: vv. 10-13; vv. 14-15; vv. 16-18.

One intriguing aspect of this text is whether Daniel intentionally provoked the reaction or it came because of his openly continuing a regular pattern of prayer. This question has surfaced many times over the centuries of study of this text. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "The Book of Daniel," vol. 8, *New Interpreter's Bible* (iPreach) has some interesting observations about this interpretative history:

The focus of these two verses [vv. 10-11] is on two facts: (1) Daniel knows that the law has been signed, and (2) Daniel breaks the law by praying as he always had done before. What is not clear is the meaning of his opening the windows. Had Daniel always opened the windows, or was it an act of civil disobedience? Side issues need not detain us here, such as the implication of his having an upper room (a sign of wealth or prestige?).¹⁷⁵

Interesting questions arise when one examines the text of Dan 6:10[11], particularly with regard to the presumption that Daniel actually threw open his windows in defiance of Darius's law. The text clearly means to suggest that Daniel disobeys the king's decree. But is he found out or has Daniel openly violated the law? The Aramaic reads in the passive—that is, the windows "were opened," implying that they always were that way. The Theodotian text of the Septuagint reflects the Aramaic passive construction, using a passive participle form. The passive form suggests that, although Daniel was defying the law, he was not intending to defy it in any way that was innovative or different from his routine. However, the Old Greek text reads in the active voice, with Daniel actually throwing open his windows before he prays. The Vulgate also reflects this reading, which is rendered in the Douay as: "Now when Daniel knew . . . that the law was made, he went into his house and, opening the windows in his upper chamber toward Jerusalem, he knelt down three times a day."

The Ethiopic texts (4th century?)¹⁷⁶ echo this construction, rather than the Theodotion/MT passive voice.¹⁷⁷ Clearly, the active voice tends to emphasize Daniel's prayers as an act of open or public defiance more than does the passive, although the theme of defiance is not thereby totally absent even in the Theodotion/MT reading.

It is interesting that earlier commentators did not see any sense of defiance in Daniel's actions.¹⁷⁸ Montgomery commented on the rituals of the passage (e.g., prayer toward Jerusalem) and summarized that the story was written for the encouragement of the community. That Daniel was praying for mercy, seeking favor from the Lord, suggests that he knew what the implications of his actions would be. Seeking mercy is the usual response of Jewish Diaspora communities when confronted with potential tragedy (see chap. 2). Although it is strange that fasting is not mentioned here, given the argument about Jewish fasting in exile (see Commentary on 9:3-19; Excursus "On Fasting, Communal Prayer, and Heavenly Warfare," 123-26) perhaps this is because Darius himself is depicted as fasting.

The story, in short, represents an act of civil disobedience on Daniel's part, whether that disobedience was public or whether he was spied upon to discover him defying the king's decree. The mention of open windows, however, mitigates against the idea that he was spied upon. Daniel was openly declaring his disobedience by keeping open, or even throwing open, his windows.

Daniel was quickly discovered to be in defiance of the king's command and his enemies couldn't wait to report him to the king. In their report, their anti-Jewish sentiments come to the surface powerfully.

The reaction of Darius to their report is distress. He liked Daniel and did not want to execute him. But the inviability of the decree left him little choice but to sentence Daniel to death. Again George A. F. Knight ["The Book of Daniel," *The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible*, iPreach] comments are helpful:

Apparently the author visualizes the den of lions as a pit somewhat like a cistern (cf. Gen. 37:24; Jer. 38:6), with only a single opening at the top. Over this a stone is placed and sealed so that its position cannot be changed without disturbing a lump of moist clay into which the king's carved signet ring has been impressed. Probably the procedure is to tie the stone in place with a rope and enclose the knot in the clay (cf. Matt. 27:64:66). The king is so distressed that he spends a sleepless night.

Paul M. Lederach ["Daniel," *Believer's Church Bible Commentary*, iPreach] notes some important aspects about verses 16 -18:

As the story is told, the prayerlike statement by the king anticipates the climax of the chapter where the king makes a confession about the God who delivers, and where he orders all to worship this God (6:26-27). Whatever the king's intent, with these words Daniel is thrown to the lions. A stone is placed upon the opening of the den. In the material used to seal the opening, they place the mark of the king's signet ring and those of his lords, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel (6:17). The unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians has intersected with the law of Daniel's eternal God. Will God act or will the law of the Medes and Persians prevail?

Fearful for Daniel's life, angry with himself for what he has done, and frustrated with a law that can not be changed, the king goes to his palace. That night is different from those that have gone before, with fasting instead of food. He cannot relax. No diversions are brought to him, and sleep fled from him (6:18, RSV). Translators do not agree on what is not brought to him: the Aramaic word *daawan* is rendered variously as diversions (RSV), food (NRSV), eating and . . . entertainment (NIV) such as musical instruments (Davidson: 149); cf. 1 Sam. 16:23), concubines (JB), or woman (REB).

The linkage question now comes: Does Daniel's experience at this point apply to today? Parts of it do apply clearly; other parts not so clearly. The first segment, vv. 10-13, challenge us to be true to our God openly and not try to hide our faith. Just as the ancient Aramaic text assumed, Daniel did not provoke the reaction by opening the windows just so people could see what he was doing. To use a German phrase, Daniel didn't "wear his religion on his coat-sleeve." But, neither did he try to conceal his commitment to God either. Rather, he merely continued doing in public what he had already been doing for a long time: he prayed to God three times daily. It was this consistency that his enemies were counting on. Our challenge is to be a Christian in the workplace and elsewhere, but do so in a natural fashion as a genuine reflection of sincere commitment to God. We don't need to be obnoxious in our faith expression, just sincere and real. The failure here by a growing number of Christians in our day is bothersome. With one's religious faith



becoming more public in our society, many Christians are using that to display their faith in a confrontational and repugnant manner -- a sort of "in your face" display of Christianity. Such repulsive expression of religion turns many people away from the Gospel, rather than attracts them to Christ. The challenge before us is to find how to be both open in our expression of our faith and to be sincere and genuine in our commitment, without becoming a repulsive Christian.

c. The Deliverance (vv. 19-28)

NASB

19 Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den. 20 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?" 21 Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 "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." 23 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. 24 The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

25 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! 26 "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,

NRSV

19 Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. 20 When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?" 21 Daniel then said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong." 23 Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. 24 The king gave a command, and those who had accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. Before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

25 Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: "May you have abundant prosperity! 26 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: For he is the living God, enduring forever. His kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion has no end. 27 He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in

NLT

19 Very early the next morning, the king hurried out to the lions' den. 20 When he got there, he called out in anguish, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you worship continually, able to rescue you from the lions?" 21 Daniel answered, "Long live the king! 22 My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty." 23 The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him because he had trusted in his God. 24 Then the king gave orders to arrest the men who had maliciously accused Daniel. He had them thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. The lions leaped on them and tore them apart before they even hit the floor of the den.

25 Then King Darius sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: "Peace and prosperity to you! 26 "I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel. For he is the living God, and he will endure forever. His kingdom will never be destroyed, and his rule will never end. 27 He rescues and saves his people; he performs miraculous signs and wonders in the heavens and on earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

And His dominion *will be* forever. 27 "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." 28 So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

heaven and on earth; for he has saved Daniel from the power of the lions." 28 So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.^{F25}

Footnotes

F25: Or of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus the Persian.



Comments:

Once more we turn to the summary comments of George A. F. Knight [“The Book of Daniel,” *The Interpreter’s One Volume Commentary on the Bible*, iPreach]:

6:19-27. Dan.’s Vindication. As the pagan king hurries at dawn to the mouth of the den, his hope to find Dan. alive is based, not on any expectation that the lions may have lacked appetite, but on the realization that Dan. serves a living God, i.e. one able to take direct action to save (cf. e.g. Deut. 5:26; Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26; 2 Kings 19:4). His hope proves justified; just as God through his angel, lit. “messenger,” could keep the flames of the furnace from harming the 3 young men who were similarly faithful (ch. 3), so now he has shut the lions’ mouths and kept them from harming Dan. (cf. Pss. 91:13). God has so

acted because Dan. is blameless, i.e. not sinless but constant in his observance of the Mosaic law. To the loyal Jews suffering agonies of mind and body for their continued observance of that law in the face of the hellenizing policies of Antiochus Epiphanes this story was calculated to bring fresh hope, the assurance that God had been and still was powerful to save those who trusted in him.

6:24. Lest any reader question whether the lions’ sparing of Dan. was due to deficient ferocity rather than divine prohibition, the author quickly goes on to describe their immediate destruction of Dan.’s accusers. The sentencing of the plotters to the same fate they sought for Dan. is in accordance with the Mosaic law (Deut. 19:16-19), but the inclusion of their children and wives is contrary to that law (Deut. 24:16).

6:25-27. Darius’ decree follows the form of Nebuchadnezzar’s letter and uses some of the same phrases (see above on 4:1-3), and his hymn of praise is similar in language and thought to that of Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 4:3, 34-35). In ending his series of stories of Dan. with the report that this one man’s courageous devotion resulted in the commendation of reverence for Israel’s God to countless pagans, the author may be meaning to say that an individual’s faith is no mere private affair but has a missionary outcome. The loyalty of persecuted Jews in his own day may not only achieve their own salvation but be instrumental in establishing God’s kingdom in all the earth—as in fact it was.

6:28. The Beginning of the Persian Empire. In a concluding note to the stories the author mentions the accession of Cyrus the Persian, which he evidently understands as bringing to an end the Median Empire and inaugurating the Persian Empire. No hint is given of the means by which Cyrus gained the power, no doubt because, having attributed to Darius the Mede the capture of Babylon which historically occurred under Cyrus (see above on 5:30-31), he knows no other tradition of Cyrus’ conquest.

The rescue of Daniel by the Lord is the climatic point of the story, and the most important aspect. The execution of the wives and children of Daniel’s enemies is somewhat troubling to us, but was a normal part of the ancient collectivistic societies like the Babylonian one here. The central point is that evil will eventually be punished, while righteousness will find God’s blessing. May we not forget that in our day.