

Faithful In Babylon

Daniel 6:1-9

Introduction

We come to one of the most beloved chapters in all the Bible. Even people with little or no religious upbringing are familiar with the story of Daniel in the lion's den. The chapter begins with a description of the position of Daniel (vv.1-3); the plot against Daniel (vv.4-9); and the prayer of Daniel (vv.10-11); and the prosecution of Daniel (vv.12-17). In this chapter Daniel will be the victim of an evil plot but also the recipient of divine protection (vv.18-28).

In this chapter we learn that sometimes prosperity can lead to persecution; that faithfulness to the Lord can generate hostility towards the saints of God.

When we began the book of Daniel he was a young teenager (chapter 1). Now he is well into his eighties. Daniel has lived most of his long life estranged from the place of his birth; he lives in Babylon but his heart and affections have always been in Jerusalem. He lives in Babylon but longs for Jerusalem. Daniel has lived a life of faith and prayer to the Lord Most High. His life of faithfulness and prayer has remained with him into his senior citizenship. But age is also no protection against testing and temptation. Now once again Daniel will be tested.

Daniel serves as an illustration of faith for all generations. The writer of Hebrews in his hall of faith chapter (11) speaks of Daniel when he writes; *“who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions”* (11:33).

Daniel's life of public service and personal devotion will bring him to a place where he must participate in a legitimate act of disobedience to the government (see Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-2). **He will pray even when the government outlaws public prayers.**

How did Daniel begin his day? He prays. Three times a day in a special prayer chamber, on top of his roof (v.10). Prayer for Daniel was not simply a religious exercise but a daily devotion. Prayer did not exist in the outskirts of his worship but constituted an essential element of dependence on the true and living God. We have every reason to believe that Daniel prayed privately and publicly; fervently and constantly.

No wonder the Lord calls Daniel greatly beloved (9:23; 10:11, 19).

Faithfulness can bring great reward. Faithfulness can also bring trial, testing, and persecution. Just ask Job. Just ask Joseph. Just ask Daniel. There is no such thing as untested faith. The Bible says “the just will live by faith” (Hebrews 10:38). True Biblical faith includes both substance (assurance) and evidence (proof). Faith is the inner conviction that what God says and does can be trusted. Dr. J. Oswald Sanders says; “Faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen.” By faith we see what others cannot see and invite God's Holy Spirit to strengthen us to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus and the Gospel.

Faithful In Babylon

Daniel 6:1-9

A Description Of Daniel's Authority (vv.1-3)

Daniel 6:1–9 (NKJV) It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom;

The Lord elevates Daniel to a position of great political power and authority. The new king Darius recognizes in Daniel the character qualities necessary to administer the new regime.

The Medes and Persians are now firmly in control over Babylon and all of Babylon's former possessions. The provinces were divided into 120 administrative districts that were governed by local leaders who were called *satraps*. The title roughly translates to a local president, king or ruler. For this reason each of these provinces were called a satrapy.

2and 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.

In this hierarchy Darius appointed three governors and it would appear that Daniel was the first administrative governor. It may be that each governor was responsible for 40 administrative districts.

What is the chief characteristic of an administrative ruler?

“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2).

The governors were tasked with the administrative stewardship so that the king would suffer no loss. Let me put it more plainly. The governors were tasked with the safety and financial oversight of this vast kingdom and to make sure that funds were not embezzled. Daniel and the other governors were tasked with rooting out corruption and making sure the appropriate funds made their way to the king's treasury. **We might think of this section as Daniel drains the swamp.**

3Then 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.

Remember Daniel is quite advanced in age. But in spite of his age; because of God's favor and blessing—Daniel distinguishes himself above all his peers. The new king recognized in Daniel “an excellent spirit”. What does that mean? Some scholars have suggested that it is a reference to the Babylonian's belief that their deities or supernatural forces worked through Daniel. Others say the phrase in context more likely means that Daniel was a man of steadfast character; full of wisdom, honesty, integrity, and faithfulness.

In the beginning of the book we read that Daniel and his friends had “*learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams*” (1:17) and later

Faithful In Babylon

Daniel 6:1-9

“an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, solve riddles, and solve problems were found in Daniel” (5:12).

The king is so impressed with Daniel’s skill the king considered placing Daniel in the position of prime minister or chief administrator. **Sometimes God will exalt His servants through the favor of powerful leaders.**

A Plot Against Daniel’s Integrity (vv.4-9)

4So 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.

The favor of God and the king in the ministry of Daniel apparently made his peers resent Daniel. It would appear that this envy and jealousy was widespread. This launched what seems like a full scale investigation into the background, character and conduct of Daniel.

The Bible gives repeated warnings for those who indulge in jealousy and envy. Jesus said the source of these corrosive emotions lie in the human heart. “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts. . .coveting, wickedness, deceit. . .envy, slander, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:20-22).

“Jealousy is a terrible thing. It resembles love, only it is precisely loves contrary. Instead of wishing for the welfare of the object loved, it desires the dependence of that object upon itself, and its own triumph. Love is the forgetfulness of self; jealousy is the most passionate form of egotism, the glorification of a despotic, exacting and vain ego, which can neither forget nor subordinate itself. The contrast is perfect” (Henri-Frederic Amiel).

Jealousy is jaundice of the soul.

Full Babylonian Investigation

And what did this full scale investigation yield?

“. . .but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.”

No charge or fault or error. . .because he was faithful”.

What an amazing testimony. Daniel was found faithful. Constant. Present. In the New Testament Jesus said; “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other” (Mark 9:50 NIV). We are to be found faithful. Jesus used salt to illustrate three qualities that are to be found in His people; We

Faithful In Babylon

Daniel 6:1-9

remember God’s faithfulness—just as salt was used with the sacrifice that recalled God’s covenant with his people (Leviticus 2:13). Faithful—and flavorful—we flavor the world. Just as salt changes the taste of meat (see Matthew 5:13). Salt delays decomposition. We live in a world that is rotting and decaying at a rapid rate. We are to arrest and counteract the moral decay in our culture. Salt arrests and preserves its host from decay. **When we lose the desire to salt the earth with the love of God and the message of Christ—the gospel—we become useless to our Savior.**

What does it mean to be a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ? Paul told the Corinthians “Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). We are to be lovers of the truth. Paul told the Corinthians “*The truth of Christ is in me*” (2 Corinthians 11:10). What was the theme of Paul’s preaching? The unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8). Paul was motivated by the love of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:14); and the power of Jesus was his strength (2 Corinthians 12:9). The work of Jesus was his joy (Philippians 2:30) and to please Jesus was his ambition (Galatians 1:10). Daniel wanted to love his Lord—even in captivity.

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

In this statement we find another source for the Babylonian’s deep resentment. Daniel is a Jew. Daniel is a faithful Jew who honors God.

Daniel has proved faithful to the king. The wicked men hatch a new plot. “We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God”—how can we use Daniel’s faith as a tool to get rid of him? What are Daniel’s deeply held convictions? Daniel prays. Prayer is a means of petition. What if we criminalize prayer? What if we literally make it illegal to prayer to any god or all gods just for a season? What if we can find a way to criminalize Daniel’s faith—and make it a capital crime to pray?

What is obvious in our text? Daniel is known for his commitment to honor The Lord God Most High. Daniel’s faith and faithfulness were well known to his pagan peers. **There was nothing secret—or private about his faith. Daniel’s faith was known among all peoples.**

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

7All 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.

The phrase “live forever” was like saying; “God save the King”.

Faithful In Babylon

Daniel 6:1-9

The governors, administrators, satraps, counselors and advisors have all come up with bi-partisan and a unanimous consensus to establish a royal statute and firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.

What is the purpose of the law? Why its to demonstrate that all subjects in this great kingdom are loyal to the king. It is a law intended to provide the opportunity for every citizen to demonstrate their love and loyalty to their king and to show what a wise and merciful and generous king we have. **Can you imagine? For thirty days—all people—everywhere—unite in a singular display of unity—calling on their king—his wisdom and generosity to meet their needs. We pray a united prayer—to you—we look to you—we are one people with one king and trust our king to wisely decide what we need. And if someone decides not to demonstrate their unconditional loyalty to our king and his kingdom—we kill them.**

What is the problem with this request? The first thing; it's not true. All the governors have not consulted together. Daniel was left out of the discussions. If Daniel had been included he would never have agreed to such a foolish law. Daniel would have warned the king that only the true and living God can answer certain prayers and petitions. The officials must have kept this piece of legislation secret from Daniel.

Ancient kings were often treated like gods; with unlimited resources and the power of life and death. Darius would have been flattered and thrilled that all his people unite in a single act of unconditional loyalty.

This is not the only example of bad advise or evil counsel given in the Scripture.

The Bible makes clear that prayer belongs to God alone. “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). Jesus said, “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the Synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly I say to you, they have their reward” (Matthew 6:5).

8Now, 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.”

9Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

The Medes and Persians laws and customs were different from the Babylonians. In the Babylonian system the king had absolute rule. In the Medo-Persian system once an edict was signed into law—it could not be undone—even by the king. The leaders emphasized that the ordinance could not change. We see this same thing in Esther 1:19 where a royal order was “written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed.” We have saying—“It is set in stone” (Esther 8:8).

Faithful In Babylon

Daniel 6:1-9

The king signs the document (v.9).

Let's think about what has happened. The leaders appeal to the king's vanity and pride. The government officials manipulate the king into signing an order that would become a permanent injunction that would put Daniel—and anyone who believed like Daniel in jeopardy.

The government officials knew that Daniel would never compromise his commitment to the Lord God Most High by praying to Darius. The government officials must have sighed a collective sigh of relief. We are rid of Daniel.

Conclusion

Corrupt politicians conspiring together to ruin and destroy one man's reputation couldn't happen today right? No one would destroy a good and decent man's life to protect their ability to continue to engage in wicked and corrupt behavior right?

Daniel was a picture of public and personal integrity. He loved the Lord his God. He was honest in the stewardship that was entrusted to him. In Psalm 119 we see another picture of honest living; "Blessed are those who walk blameless" (v.1). Blessed are those who "seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong" (vv.2-3). The Psalmist acknowledges the Lord God; "You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently" (v.4). The Psalmist hoped in his heart "Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments" (vv.5-6).

Only a hand full of people in the Bible receive God's pronouncement of blameless. Job, Joseph, Daniel. No we are not perfect. Blameless does not mean sinless.

Imagine Daniel hears the words of Jesus whispered from the future; "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake." "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12).

Have you ever been rightly accused? Falsely accused? Have you ever considered that your life is a stewardship entrusted to you by the Lord Jesus Christ to serve Christ? If not, would you think about it right now?