

Daniel 6 • Not Just a Test of Faith, but Faithfulness

Introduction

At this point Daniel is what we might understand to be the Prime Minister of the Medo-Persian Empire. It is important to note that he is no longer a teenager, but most likely in his 80's. He is a significant example to us proving that age is no barrier to service to Christ, nor any kind of protection or exemption to temptation or trials. But because Daniel was someone who practiced his faith consistently, he possessed faithfulness even into his old age. One of the greatest lessons we can learn from Daniel is what it means to enter into a **lifetime** of obedience to Christ and the benefits of refusing to deviate even the least from God's Word and ways.

¹⁰Now 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.

Read verse 10

Q: How did Daniel begin each day?

A: He prayed to the Lord.

Q: How are Daniel's prayer habits described?

A: He prayed three times a day in a special place atop his house.

Q: What might sound familiar about someone who is an example to watch and pray?

A: This is how Jesus instructed His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

— Matthew 26:41

Application: Prayer was not an incidental thing in Daniel's life. In fact, it was the most important thing. He had a special place, special times, and he was consistent and persistent. How does this compare to your own prayer life?

Q: How is Daniel described by God?

A: God repeatedly says Daniel is "highly esteemed" or in many translations "greatly beloved". (Dan. 8:23, 10:11, 10:19) Note how Daniel's character fits in with Jesus' own description of what it means to be one of God's "beloved sons" ...

"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."

— John 14:21–23

Q: Who else was known to habitually start the day with the Lord?

1. **Abraham.** "Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD;" (Genesis 19:27)
2. **David.** "In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch." (Psalm 5:3)
3. **Jesus.** "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there." (Mark 1:35)

Application: How confident are you that your personal commitment to prayer, meditation on God's Word, and all the things which comprise a consistent, personal pursuit of your relationship with Christ are providing the kind of foundation that will hold up when the strongest of temptations or trials come your way? How well do you see for mature believers it begins with a "dawn of devotion"?

¹It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, ²and 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. ³Then 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. ⁴Then 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. ⁵Then 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."

⁶Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever! ⁷All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, 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. ⁸Now, 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." ⁹Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

Read verses 1-9

Q: What is the most likely reason that Darius re-organized his government?

A: In v. 2 it specifically states, "that the king might not suffer loss". Darius was trying to deal with the corruption within his own government where leaders were stealing from the king and covering it up with false accounts and such.

Q: How is this core problem of corruption further confirmed by the nature of the attempt to find something wrong with Daniel?

A: It specifically mentions "but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption". (v.4)

Application: True spiritual faithfulness to God is proven by equal faithfulness to man. Daniel's consistent, daily walk with God resulted in an earthly walk which was equally faithful and above reproach. How might this teach us something about the struggles we might experience in our daily life? Might it be connected to the quality of our daily devotion to Christ?

Q: So what is their problem with Daniel?

A: While part of the problem could be jealousy over his appointment, and part may even be an anti-Semitic reaction to a Jew being placed in such a prominent position, the central issue is that Daniel is doing the best job of meeting the king's requirements to halt corruption within his government. The chief problem they have with Daniel is that their ability to unduly profit from their positions has been ground to a halt, at least over the 40 provinces under his jurisdiction as one of the three commissioners. If he is made to rule over all, they foresee the possibility that ALL corruption in the entire kingdom could be halted.

Q: What is significant about the approach the officials took to unseat Daniel?

A: It is rooted in spiritual deception. Finding no earthly weakness that they can exploit, they must resort to inventing a spiritual issue from which to operate.

Q: But what is especially evil about their approach to devising a spiritual deception?

A: They knew it must be something "with regard to the law of his God". (v.5) In other words, they had some conscious understanding that Daniel's God was real and that they needed to get Daniel into trouble with the God of Israel, not just with any of the many gods which were worshiped. Like Balaam with the nation Israel, they sought to create a situation where Daniel compromised his faith in the One True God.

Application: This is not just a test of "faith", but "faithfulness".

Q: What is very important about the officials' request of the king?

A: It was a lie. They asserted that "All the commissioners of the kingdom...have consulted together that the king should establish an injunction..." (v.7) Daniel, being one of the three commissioners, obviously was neither consulted about this nor gave his approval for it.

Q: Why do they specifically mention to the king, "according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked"?

A: One of the unique things about the Medo-Persian government is that once something is signed into law it cannot be repealed, even by the king who authorized it. This shows that the officials absolutely knew of the king's affection for Daniel and that they wanted to take away the possibility of the king's protection for Daniel. They did not just need to deceive Daniel, but the king as well.

Application: One might characterize the situation as a "morning of deception".

¹⁰Now 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. ¹¹Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. ¹²Then 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."

¹³Then 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."

¹⁴Then, 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. ¹⁵Then 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."

Read verses 10-13

Q: What is probably the most important thing to note about Daniel's reaction?

A: "...Daniel knew that the document was signed". (v.10) He made the conscious decision to continue as always even with the knowledge of what was going on.

Q: What excuses could Daniel have employed if he had chosen to compromise?

1. "I've been faithful my whole life, how could this little thing so late in life really change anything?"
2. "Everybody else is doing it."
3. "I would be far more useful to the Lord alive than dead."
4. "It's only for 30 days; I can hold off until then."
5. Others?

Q: But how might Daniel's prayer life be biblically characterized?

A: He prays "without ceasing". (1 Th. 5:17)

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

— *Philippians 4:6–7*

Application: Daniel is not engaging in a "crisis prayer meeting", but maintaining what a lifetime has produced in him as a lifestyle. Having consistently and daily acted in faithfulness for so long, he can act in no other way even when the worst has come. How might this convict us of our own personal habits?

Q: What might be notable about the way Daniel went about his prayer routine in the shadow of the new law?

A: Daniel did not make himself into some kind of spectacle or political statement by engaging in prayer in the court of the king or in some unusual fashion. Daniel went about it in the exact same way and at the exact same times in the exact same place. He does everything "as he had been doing previously". (v.10)

Q: What might be interesting about the charge brought against Daniel?

A: Whereas they had to lie to the king to get the law enacted, all they had to do was tell the truth to the king to prove Daniel was in violation of that decree.

Q: But what is the particular spin or emphasis they highlight in their accusation?

A: Daniel "pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction you signed". (v.13) They want to infer that what Daniel is doing should be taken as a personal break in his relationship with the king and has no actual regard for Medo-Persian law. Even though Daniel's actions maintain his faithfulness to the King of Heaven, earthly antagonists want to paint a picture of unfaithfulness to the king of earth.

Application: One might characterize the situation as "a noon of decision".

Read verses 14-17

Q: What is interesting about the contrast between what the antagonists thought about Daniel's God versus King Darius?

A: Both seem to believe in the existence of the God of Daniel, but the antagonists believe Daniel's faith can be compromised in God whereas Darius believes it can be affirmed.

¹⁶Then 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." ¹⁷A 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.

¹⁸Then 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.

¹⁹Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den. ²⁰When 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?"

²¹Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever! ²²My 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."

²³Then 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.

Application: A believer's life serves as a dual witness in that to some it is a testimony which encourages a heart to embrace Christ, but to those rejecting Him it is ultimately a testimony of judgment against them.

Q: Why might it be said that God did not want Daniel to be saved FROM the lions' den?

A: Because it was God's design to save Daniel **OUT OF** the lions' den.

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

I will praise the LORD while I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Do not trust in princes,

In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation.

His spirit departs, he returns to the earth;

In that very day his thoughts perish.

How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,

Whose hope is in the LORD his God,

Who made heaven and earth,

The sea and all that is in them;

Who keeps faith forever;

— Psalm 146:1–6

Application: One might characterize the situation as "a sundown of disappointment".

Read verses 18-23

Q: What is probably the greater spiritual meaning of Daniel being thrown into the lions' den from a biblical perspective?

A: It is Satan himself who is characterized in Scripture as a roaring lion and who uses our enemies in an attempt to devour us.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

— 1 Peter 5:8–9

But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.

— 2 Timothy 4:17

Q: How are Darius' and Daniel's positions ironically opposite of what we would expect them to be?

1. Darius had no peace; Daniel was at perfect peace with himself, the Lord, and the lions.
2. Darius was in danger from those around him, he could have been slain by his enemies in his own chambers; Daniel by God's protection was in a perfect place of safety in spite of being in the lions' den.
3. Darius strove all day to save Daniel from judgment but could not break his own laws; Daniel simply talked to the King of Heaven and was vindicated by a higher Law he never broke.
4. Darius was far more in the position of a slave; Daniel was far more in the position of a king.
5. Others?

Q: What is specifically mentioned as having delivered Daniel on his part?

A: In v.23 it says, "because he had trusted in his God".

*who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness,
obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,*

— Hebrews 11:33

Q: Why might it be remarkable that Daniel had any faith at all?

A: He lived his entire adult life in an idolatrous and heathen land. This is probably the greatest testimony to what can be accomplished by a daily commitment to faithfulness.

*He delivered me from my strong enemy,
And from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.
They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my stay.*

*He brought me forth also into a broad place;
He rescued me, because He delighted in me.
The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.*

*For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.*

*For all His ordinances were before me,
And I did not put away His statutes from me.*

I was also blameless with Him,

And I kept myself from my iniquity.

*Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in His eyes.*

— Psalm 18:17–24

Application: *The only really safe place is in the will of God. Daniel would rather die in obedience to God's Word and ways than live outside the will of God. While it is not always God's will to deliver every believer from danger, and many have given their lives in that place of duty, what a reward God promises even in that circumstance!*

'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

— Revelation 2:10

Application: *One might characterize the situation as "a night of deliverance".*

Read verses 24-28

Q: Was the king being especially cruel by causing the antagonists' entire families to be killed alongside with them?

A: Actually we know from extra-biblical historical accounts that this punishment was the law of the empire at that time. In other words, the same unyielding law which could not be changed and forced Darius to finally throw Daniel into lions' den is the same unyielding, unchanging law that dictated entire families must be punished alongside the offenders.

Q: How would you describe why God allowed Daniel to go through this experience?

A: It brought glory to God's name.

²⁴The 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.

²⁵Then 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! ²⁶I 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.

²⁷He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth,
Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

²⁸So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

— *Philippians 1:20*

Application: *When Christians overcome temptation and trials it is always something that glorifies the Lord. How well do you recognize that personal faithfulness is not just something undertaken for yourself alone but is, in fact, a visible testimony to everyone about you?*

Application: *One might characterize this as “a morning of destruction”.*

Overall Application

Is this really a cute little story for kids as it has so often been made out to be? What are the greater lessons about the importance of a consistent prayer life and spiritual faithfulness which obviously apply to us personally?