

## Finding Fault With The Faithful

Scripture Text: Daniel 6:1-10

### Introduction

Chapter six of Daniel is probably the most famous chapter in the book. Most people know about Daniel in the lion's den. Daniel was a much older man in this chapter and faced a real challenge to his faith. If Daniel was a teenager when he was exiled into Babylon, that would make him about eighty (80) years old in this chapter. The last time we were in the book of Daniel, we read about a mysterious handwriting on the wall and King Belshazzar's fall from power. God had weighed King Belshazzar in the balances and found him lacking. This meant that Belshazzar had not lived up to what God expected of him. So, God sent Belshazzar a mysterious and supernatural message in the form of a handwriting on the wall. None of his wise men could help him, but Daniel could. Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall as a message of doom for the Babylonian Empire. Belshazzar honored Daniel for interpreting the sign; however, he did not honor Daniel's God. That very night, Darius the Mede captured Babylon and killed Belshazzar. Daniel reminds us again about the sovereignty of God, which is the main theme of the book of Daniel. God moves kings and kingdoms like pieces on a chessboard. God fulfilled what He told Nebuchadnezzar many years before. In chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about a large statue made of various materials. Daniel revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that the Babylonian Empire was the head of gold on that statue. Now, many years later, the head of gold from that statue was replaced by the chest and arms of silver representing the Medo-Persian empire. What God said to Nebuchadnezzar had come to pass. Would Daniel's situation change? Would he lose his influence to the king? More importantly, would Daniel remain faithful to God?

### God Blesses Us Even When We Are in Exile

The Babylon Empire was gone. King Nebuchadnezzar was gone. Even King Belshazzar was gone. A new king and kingdom was in power. Daniel was blessed through it all, though. Even though he was in exile in Babylon, God had blessed Daniel and given him a position of influence under the previous administrations. And now, God would continue to bless Daniel under the new king. Daniel had served the empire faithfully for almost seventy (70) years, and he would continue to serve the new king. Look at the following.

***Daniel 6:1–3*** <sup>1</sup> *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; <sup>2</sup> and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. <sup>3</sup> Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.*

The satraps were regional rulers, responsible for security and collection of taxes. They helped Darius rule the kingdom, ruling over smaller areas in the kingdom. The three high officials oversaw the satraps' work, making sure the taxes all were properly

collected and that they reached the king's treasury. Daniel was one of these three high officials. He received the reward Belshazzar had promised him before his death. Daniel did such an excellent job in this role that Darius planned to set him in an even higher position, over the whole kingdom. Daniel was distinguished among all the other officials because he had an excellent spirit! Perhaps King Darius had heard about Daniel's reputation. Perhaps he was aware of Daniel's interpretation the night Babylon fell. Daniel could have become arrogant with his position. He could have thought he was in control, but he recognized that he was merely a servant in the hands of a sovereign God. God is the one in control. God is the one who gives and who takes away. Success is not defined as worldly power and position, but being within the will of God. By that definition, are we successful? Are we living in the will of God? Are we following His plan or ours? Daniel was right where God wanted him even in a pagan country of Babylon.

### **People Will Find Fault With Your Faithfulness**

The other high officials and satraps were not happy with Daniel's good fortune. Because the king had planned to set Daniel over all the satraps and administrators, maybe they were simply jealous of him. Maybe they did not like an outsider telling them what to do. Maybe they had never accepted Daniel or the Jewish people who were living in their country. Thus, they sought to find some fault with Daniel. When people do not like you or they do not like what you are doing, some will go to great lengths to find anything wrong that they can use against you. They searched for something that they could use against him, but they found nothing. Daniel was apparently an upstanding citizen and a very capable leader. Look at the following.

***Daniel 6:4–5*** <sup>4</sup> Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. <sup>5</sup> Then these 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."

The other officials in the king's court conspired against Daniel. They may have been jealous that Daniel, an outsider and exile from Judah, was placed in such a high position. Maybe they resented the idea of answering to a Jewish exile. Either way, they did not like that Daniel was over them. They began to examine Daniel's activities in order to discover some flaw in his character or professional ability in order to bring a charge against him to the king. They found nothing against Daniel. Daniel handled his duties in a "trustworthy" way —he was neither politically "corrupt" (dishonest) nor "negligent" in the performance of his work. That should encourage us to live our life so that others cannot bring a charge against us. We ought to be *above reproach*! The only way these jealous men could find fault with Daniel was through his religion. Daniel was devoted to God. He was a devout Jewish man. And...Daniel was predictable. These evil men knew of Daniel's faithfulness, his devotion to God, and how he worshipped God. Is our faith so predictable? Do others know who we serve? If someone wanted to bring a charge against us for being faithful to God, would there be enough evidence to convict

us? There was for Daniel, so, these evil men conspired and hatched a plan to influence the king and bring Daniel down. Look at the following verses.

***Daniel 6:6–9*** <sup>6</sup> Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, “O King Darius, live forever! <sup>7</sup> All the high officials 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 injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. <sup>8</sup> Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.” <sup>9</sup> Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

These evil men lied to the king when they made this proposal. They said “all the high officials of the kingdom” agreed to this proposal. Most likely, the large majority of these rulers were not even in the city of Babylon but were in the outlying areas and would have been totally unaware of the scheme. Likely only a few persons were involved. Obviously, Daniel did not agree to this and he was a high official in the kingdom. So, they went to King Darius with a proposal for a new law: for the next thirty days no one was to petition any god or man, except to the king himself. Anyone who disobeyed this law would be cast into the den of lions, where they would be torn to pieces and devoured. Darius would be the only priestly mediator during the 30 day period. In his role as mediator, prayers to the gods were to be offered through him rather than the priests. Darius likely viewed this law as a political rather than a religious edict, seeing it as a means of uniting the realm by identifying himself as the sole mediator between the people and the gods, the source of their every blessing. Darius may also have permitted this decree as a test of loyalty to his new government. Also, the new law could not be revoked once put into place, possibly because it would cast doubt in the royal edicts and disrupt the loyalty of the king’s subjects.

### **Remain Faithful Always...Especially In Times of Adversity**

Chapter six sort of reminds us of chapter three, when Nebuchadnezzar threw Daniel’s three young friends into the fiery furnace because they would not bow down and worship his golden statue. This time under the rule of King Darius, Daniel faced a similar situation. We are all called to be faithful. It may be easy for some to be faithful to God, to please Him when things are going well. Some, may find that to be a distraction. Has the church in America been faithful to her calling to make disciples in this relatively peaceful time and place we are in? Have we done what we are supposed to do in relative times of peace? If we cannot be faithful in the good times, how will we be faithful in the bad times? So, we ought to remain faithful at all times, and especially in times of adversity. The jealous officials decided that there was only one area in which they might cause Daniel harm namely, in his faithfulness to God. They created a situation that would force Daniel to choose between obeying his god or obeying his king. What would you do if you were Daniel? What did Daniel do? Look at the following verse.

***Daniel 6:10*** When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

Daniel did exactly what he had always done. He prayed to God just like he had done before Darius signed the law. Daniel did not change his religious behavior when man's law made it illegal for him to continue it, nor did he hide his religious behavior. Daniel was a man of courage and conviction who was willing to stand for God even if it meant death. Maybe you are thinking, "Why did Daniel not pray secretly?" He did not have to let the others know what he was doing. Perhaps, Daniel did not want to change his behavior because some human king said he could not pray to God. Perhaps, Daniel was placing his complete trust in God, who could protect him or bring him through whatever trouble his faithful worship may bring upon himself. Perhaps, Daniel continued his practice of kneeling in prayer three times a day toward Jerusalem, fulfilling the scenario that King Solomon described in his prayer at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 8:46–50). Look at the following portion from Solomon's prayer.

***1 Kings 8:46–50*** <sup>46</sup> "If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near, <sup>47</sup> yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,' <sup>48</sup> if they repent with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, <sup>49</sup> then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause <sup>50</sup> and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you, and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them..."

Daniel's practice of prayer must have made it easy for the satraps and high officials to gather the evidence necessary to convict Daniel. There are four things about Daniel's religious life that are evident from this passage.

First, *Daniel prayed three times a day*, supposedly at morning, midday, and night. One might say that Daniel was a man of prayer. We all ought to be people of prayer. Daniel was an example of the importance of the discipline of prayer for us.

Second, not only did he pray, but *Daniel also thanked God*. Even though Daniel was still away from home, a foreigner in a strange land, living under a different government, he was thankful to God. Even with the threat of death looming over his head, Daniel refused to follow the evil mandate and still worshipped his God. He still gave thanks to God. Are we thankful to God even when it might not be the best of circumstances?

Third, *Daniel did not hide his religious convictions*. He was not a secret disciple but a man who was not ashamed to let others know what his allegiance was. The schemers who wanted to find some fault in Daniel knew his convictions and that he was faithful to God. Do others know your convictions? Do people know you follow Jesus?

Fourth, *Daniel did not compromise even in the face of death*. Daniel knew the consequences of being devoted to God. He knew what would happen if people saw him being faithful to God. He remained faithful to God even under the threat of death. Like the apostles who faced persecution for sharing Jesus with others, Daniel knew he must obey God rather than men. Would we be so faithful today? If someone came into this place and demanded that you renounce Christ or you would die, what would you do?

Those who follow Jesus are being called to make difficult ethical choices. As the world becomes more and more secular (and sinful), believers will increasingly find themselves taking stands that are unpopular and positions that may even violate the law of the land. What will you do when it becomes illegal to worship Jesus? What will you do when the unbelievers find fault with your faithfulness?

## **Conclusion**

In closing, remember, God gives and takes away. Don't get comfortable with prosperity, nor depressed with hard times. No matter what you have or do not have, Jesus is all you need. Also, you can expect people to find fault with your faithfulness. When they do, when your faith becomes unpopular, be a Daniel. Remain committed and faithful to God, regardless of the personal cost to you. Remember who you really serve. This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!