



Daniel

דניאל

Chapter 6

WHAT DOES FAITH LOOK LIKE?

What does faith look like? Can you see it? Lots of people refer to themselves as Christians or adherents of other faiths, but how do you know if someone truly believes what they claim? Daniel gives an example of what true faith looks like to those peering in from the outside. Even centuries later, it's crystal clear.

Earlier, in Daniel chapter 2, we saw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego being persecuted for not bowing down to the idol set up by king Nebuchadnezzar. In this chapter, we see Daniel persecuted for bowing down before the living God. As Christians we face persecution from two aspects: one for not following the world's patterns and the other for what we specifically believe. The two are very different, and Daniel clearly shows both angles and what true faith looks like. It is never comfortable to face unpopularity or difficulties because of our faith. But too often we make compromises in an effort to fit in rather than standing strongly for what we believe regardless of the consequences. Many Christians today have even given up saying grace in public settings because they have bought into the world's view that religion should be kept out of sight. Wrong. God wants our faith in Him to be shared, and honors those who act as faithful witnesses. In this light, we learn tremendous lessons from Daniel.

6DANIEL 6:1-2

It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps, which should rule throughout the whole kingdom;

And over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was first. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king should suffer no loss.

- Who exactly is Darius? While some higher critics suggest that it is actually Cyrus, this is impossible if you believe Scripture. The 70-year requirement for the time of the exiles to be released from Babylon is still three years away, and God does not deal in approximations. When he says 70 years He means that precisely. The Holy Spirit goes out of his way to let us know that Darius was not Cyrus, even pointing out that Darius was a Mede and that Cyrus was a Persian. This Darius (the term actually means "Royal One") is most likely Gubaru. Though he was technically called a governor in archeological records, it is also apparent that he was given powers equal to that of a king, so it's acceptable to have him referred to as king.



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- Darius was very creative organizationally. He understood the need to restructure the empire, and this act suggests that there was great civil disobedience following Belshazzar's rule.
- Satraps are high-level civil administrators. These 120 were of lesser rank than a group of 20 mentioned by the historian Herodotus. Above those 20 were three commissioners of whom Daniel was one. It is likely that most of the others were either Medes or Persians.

DANIEL 6:3-5

Then Daniel was preferred above the presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king planned to set him over the whole realm.

Then the presidents and satraps looked for grounds against Daniel in his conduct over the kingdom, but they could find no occasion nor fault; because he was trustworthy, neither was there any negligence or corruption found in him.

Then these men said, We will not find any grounds for charges against this Daniel, unless we find something that has to do with the law of his God.

- Obviously some additional time has passed for Daniel's reputation to be established with Darius.
- Imagine being of such principled character that people can't even find a weakness that they might eventually be able to use against you! Daniel's character was above reproach in every way, without even a hint of anything that might give way in the future.
- The NLT does what I consider to be the best translation of verse 5, pointing out that the only charges these men are likely to find has to do with "the requirements" of Daniel's faith. They will use that against him.

DANIEL 6:6-7

Then these presidents and satraps assembled together before the king and said to him, "King Darius, live forever!

All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors and the satraps, advisors and captains have agreed together to establish a royal edict, and to make a firm decree, that whoever prays to any God or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.



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- Obviously the entire body of 120 satraps didn't go see the king, but a contingent representing them and many of those under them. The group would have been large enough to be impressive.
- Notice how they announce that this was unanimous, that the entire body of government had agreed to this course of action. This lie will prove to be their undoing later.
- How many weeks of planning did it take to come up with this bold plan? It was meant to solve what was obviously a problem with civil unrest throughout the empire. Timing was critical, as they had to be certain that the king would not discuss this plan with Daniel. He may have been out of the country.
- The lions' den was a pit in the ground, but not very deep, but its opening was not huge because a rock could be placed over it and a large rock would have been far too heavy. They did not use this for sport as the Romans would later. It was simply a utility for administering capital punishment. Lions may have been released into this pit from doors in the side of the pit that would be pulled up or lowered from above. Access was from above or from tunnels in the sides of the pit.

DANIEL 6:8-9

Now, O king, issue the decree and sign the writing so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians."

So king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

- Notice the pressure they put on the king to do this immediately. They could not take a chance that he would wait and discuss it with Daniel, who was being groomed for the position of Prime Minister and no doubt close to the king.
- It is possible that Daniel was out of the country on official business, or at least in some other part of the empire. As it would take some time for this large group representing large portions of the empire—Phoenicia, Palestine, Syria, Cypress—to make the trip here and hold this conference, we have to assume that they knew Daniel would be unavailable to the king.
- The Medes and the Persians (this was now the Persian empire) had long been very sensitive to political issues. It was the practice of Cyrus to appoint evenly balanced numbers of Medes and Persians into high positions to gain the support of both racial groups. It should not be assumed that the king's quick acceptance of this plan was a sign of weakness or gullibility. It quite likely followed a standard political procedure and took into account many cultural sensitivities.



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DANIEL 6:10

Now when Daniel learned that the decree was signed, he went into his house where his windows opened in his room toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he kneeled and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom.

- Daniel hears about this decree after it is established. His response is to change nothing in his spiritual habits. It would have been very easy for him to attempt to “hide” his continuing worship of God. After all, it was a mere 30-day decree. How many of us, in a setting where we might be conspicuous, take the easy way out and change our usual habits! Daniel is the example of how we should behave at all times.
- Windows in those days were not made of glass. They were solid, so closing them would have hidden Daniel from sight. Yet, knowing he was being watched, he kept them open.
- Notice that Daniel gets down on his knees to pray. In our modern culture, we tend to completely ignore this aspect of prayer. It isn't required, of course, but it is a position honoring to God and was modelled by Christ. See Luke 22:41. Stephen kneels to pray Acts 7:59-60. Paul kneels in Acts 9:40. Acts 20:36. The apostles are shown to kneel in Acts 21:5. Isn't it amazing that we can come before the King of kings without requiring this position position of subservience or even an appointment!

DANIEL 6:11-12

Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and making requests of his God.

So they came and spoke before the king concerning the king's decree: “Have you not signed a decree, that every man that prays to any God or man within thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered, “The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed.

- The men knew how Daniel would respond. Do those who know you have a clear idea how you would respond in a situation like this?
- They first ask the king to confirm his authority. It's interesting when you see his answer, because it suggests that they accused him of changing the decree, something he would not be allowed to do. Rather than just answering “yes” he affirms that it cannot be changed.
- The empire had this decree, probably to assure allegiance by these two diverse racial and cultural groups.



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DANIEL 6:13-15

Then they answered the king, “That Daniel, one of those exiles of Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, nor to the decree that you signed, but prays to his God three times a day.”

When he heard these words, the king was deeply displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to rescue him. He made every effort until sundown to save him.

Then these men assembled before the king and said to him, “Remember, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is that no decree nor statute which the king sets up may be changed.”

- Note the anti-Semitism in their accusation. The Jews had not yet been released from captivity, but they had been in the kingdom nearly 70 years so it is highly noticeable that they use this kind of wording.
- The king’s response is fascinating. He is distressed at himself (some Bibles don’t make this clear). It suddenly dawns on him that he’s been had. Contrast his physical actions to that of Nebuchadnezzar, who couldn’t control his emotions and flew into a rage. This guy gets into motion and tries political and legal approaches to change the punishment.
- Darius makes every effort until sundown to save him. He didn’t just throw up his hands and say, “Oh well.” Besides showing his character, this also shows that he had a strong relationship with Daniel.
- The guys who put the king up to this hear about his attempts and remind him that keeping Daniel away from the required punishment would be illegal. In John 19, we see another innocent man charged with a capital crime and another governor attempting (though not as hard) to ensure that justice prevails rather than allowing the innocent man to fall to the clutches of a nasty mob.

DANIEL 6:16-18

Then the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the den of lions. Now the king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you.”

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; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting and without musical entertainment being brought before him. He was unable to sleep.



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- In the polytheistic culture of the Persians, there were no examples of real action by the gods. But in Daniel's Jewish culture, there were many examples of miraculous intervention. Darius shows enormous faith in Daniel's God when he says that God may be able to save his life. Although he goes back home, he struggles all night with the possibility that Daniel's God could save his life.
- Many scholars believe this chapter foreshadows another ruler in the future who will require people to worship him or face capital punishment. But that world leader will truly seek the worship while Darius obviously does not seek it for himself but is willing to acknowledge a higher power.
- A stone has been sealed over the opening, just as another stone will be sealed against another opening nearly 600 years later. Against the power of the true God, no seal of a mortal king can stand.
- King Darius has spent a sleepless night considering Daniel's situation and his commitment to his faith. What an impact his life has made. Daniel had no doubt that his God was able to save him, but would He? As the hours ticked by, Darius struggled with this question.

DANIEL 6:19-22

¹⁹ Then the king got up very early in the morning, and hurried to the den of lions.

²⁰ When he came close to the den, he cried with a anguished voice to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, was your God, whom you serve continually, able to save you from the lions?"

²¹ Then Daniel answered the king, "O king, live forever!

²² My God sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths. They have not hurt me. I was found innocent before him. Also, before you, O king, I have done nothing wrong."

- The stone may have already been removed, but it is possible that some commentators simply make too much of this. If the stone were still in place, it would be normal for the king to call out since he would be unable to see into the den. The stone would have many small openings rather than being a complete seal.
- Imagine the shock on Darius' face! He would have been thrilled, yet surprised. He showed remarkable faith in God, a testament to the witness Daniel had been to the reality of his faith.
- Daniel reminds the king that he was innocent of doing anything that would harm the kingdom. This appears to be a subtle admonition to Darius that he should be more balanced in the decisions he makes: his focus should be on dealing with wrongdoing, not managing religious affiliations.



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DANIEL 6:23-24

The king was extremely pleased, and commanded that they take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was lifted up out of the den, and no wound was found upon him, because he trusted in his God.

At the king's command they brought those men that had accused Daniel, and they threw them into the den of lions along with their children and their wives. And the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces before they even reached the bottom of the den.

- Now the tables are turned on the evildoers who put the king up to this trickery. It was common practice in those days to put the entire families to death to ensure that some vengeful family member wouldn't try to take out the king or cause him political trouble later on.

DANIEL 6:25-27

Then king Darius wrote to all the people, nations and languages that lived throughout the land: "Peace be multiplied to you.

I issue a decree, That in every part of my kingdom men tremble before and fear the God of Daniel. For he is the living God, and steadfast forever, his kingdom will not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.

He rescues and saves, and he works signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, and has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."

- This decree is remarkable considering the polytheistic culture. However, while it is possible that Darius was a genuine believer in the one true God, this decree is no guarantee of that.

DANIEL 6:28

So Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

- Daniel chapter 1 says that he remains in the city of Babylon until the first year of Cyrus. An old man by the time of the release of the Jewish captives (well into his eighties), it is unlikely that Daniel made the trip to Judah. His final prophetic vision was given to him on the shores of the Tigris river (Babylon is on the Euphrates) in the third year of Cyrus, so when we put that together with Daniel 1 we can assume that he left Babylon after the first year of Cyrus but continued to live in that part of the world.