

So last time we were in Daniel we talked about Belshazzar and his grand party. His party guests begin to get bored, so Belshazzar decides he is going to pull out the best party trick ever. He remembers that he is in possession of the gold and silver cups that were taken from the temple, and what better way to show they were important and wealthy than to drink from these priceless battle treasures. Just as they do, they see a hand appear and start to write something on the wall. No one could read what it said, then he was reminded that there was a man in the kingdom who was always able to help king Nebuchadnezzar with things that seemed unsolvable, he had the spirit of the holy God in him. So, Daniel was called on to read the writing, after he tells the king what was going on and what the writing meant Daniel was elevated to 3rd in command, which was really 2nd because the real king was off in Arabia partying. All this was going on while an army was surrounding the city. Belshazzar thought he was in good shape and safe from the besieging army. He was sure they could not get over the Babylon's amazing fort-like walls. And he was right, they did not come over the wall. He was overtaken by the Medo-Persian army who took their time re-routing a river, which allowed them to walk under the wall where the river once flowed with no opposition from the Babylon army.

I think we often see that people feel like they are well prepared and think they are good for when the enemy attacks, just to realize that we do not always know where the devil will come from. He uses our past life and the pleasures we are so familiar with. He uses our job, co-workers, success, failure, life and death to push his way through all of our defenses. As Christians we have Jesus to lean on and trust, sometimes the world needs to Jesus in us to have something to believe in.

As we look at chapter 6 we have a very well-known historical event. Without looking, does anyone know what event happens in Daniel 6? I really enjoy teaching the well-known events with the hopes that we can learn something new. Many of you attend Scott's Wednesday night study and a while back he taught through the book of Daniel so it will be hard to teach you all anything new.

Read Daniel 6 1-14

His Demeanor, Their Deceit, His Decision

V1-3 His Demeanor

Daniel distinguished himself, does this mean that he held himself above everyone else? Does this mean that Daniel pointed out every little thing he did to get the king to notice him? Does it mean that he knew how to talk and act when people were watching? No, he had a good spirit about him, he did the job he was supposed to do without complaint, and to the best of his ability. He wasn't looking for an "at-a-boy" he just wanted to work for God as we all should.

When you come to church do you give your best to God? Do you worship with your best, when you volunteer do you give your best? Of course we do, so what about when we go to work? Do you give your best? Let's back up and ask this....Do you claim to be a Christian, would people at work agree that you are a Christian? If so, then don't you think your employer and fellow employees should be able to tell a difference in your work than the ones who are just there for a paycheck? How about our attitude, should it be like a grumpy old man...or woman, or should it be joyful?

This is exactly what Daniel was doing, working for the Lord with all he had no matter who was writing out his check. It was because of his attitude and outstanding work ethic that the king planned to place the Daniel in charge of the entire kingdom.

This is exactly what was causing Daniel so much trouble, he was being watched. Just as we as Christians are watched. The world is always watching, trying to catch us falling short. If they watch me for even a short time I'm sure they will find what they are looking for.

V4 Their Deceit

The political heads looked as hard as they could to find something that Daniel had done wrong, either in his personal life or even his political career. With all their attempts, they came up empty every time.

Do you all remember the last few presidential running's? There was some serious digging into the candidate's pasts. The things they find are sometimes obscure and to most of completely irrelevant while other events are a huge eye-opener to their character.

Can you imagine not being able to find anything, that someone had done in bad faith, or a time when they mis-used their authority. Never took gifts or spent money that was not theirs. No one had anything bad to say about this person. Daniel was by no means perfect, and I know he fell short of the glory of God. Mostly because the bible tells us that there has only ever been one who was perfect, and Daniel was not His name.

V5

These governors and satraps had to find a way to make Daniel look bad, they would not find any corruption in him. So, they knew they could not lure him into being the bad guy. The only chance they had was to use his faithfulness against him. For the reason he was such an upstanding guy is because of his great faithfulness to God.

Let's circle back to our workplaces, do the people you work with KNOW that you will be faithful in all circumstances? See the world may not know scripture...well the true meaning of it because there are plenty who can use it out of context or spit out bits and pieces to fit what they need it to. But they all can see when we are selfish, when we are dishonest, when we unleash our bad temper. Maclaren said, "The world is a poor critic of my Christianity, but very sufficient one of my conduct." They may not see all the changes Jesus has made in our lives sense we have given Him control, but they see very clearly when we take it back.

V6-7

If these guys knew Daniel so well, don't you think they knew the king and how to appeal to his wants? Darius wanted a unified kingdom; this is why he was setting up the government like he was. It would make all of the kingdom answer to the 120 satraps who then would relay to the 3 governors. In Darius's mind they would be better suited to keep control of the kingdom.

So, they approach the king also knowing the best way to appeal to someone with that much authority is to make them feel even more important than they already do. They would make him a god for a month!

How many of you have ever thought "you know, if I was president for a month, I could change the world, I would fix so many things, I would do this and do that?" I did, I thought that when I was younger. You

know what I realized, when I was young I was dumb! Now that I'm older I'm still dumb the only difference is that now I know it!

They are trying to talk the king into setting up a law that would make it illegal to pray or worship to any other God or person. They had to lie to make it sound believable, they said ALL the royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have agreed. Isn't easier to talk someone into something when it sounds like everyone else is already on board?

But we know that Daniel is a governor, and I am positive that he would not have agreed to this! The world will do what they think they have to do to get what they want accomplished. This is not an old-world problem; we see this very thing happening today.

V8

They urged the king to put this in writing and sign it so it could not be changed. The decree of a Persian king was said to be unchangeable, because his laws came from the gods who could never be wrong. Therefore, the decrees would never need to be changed; Once it was established and signed it was so binding not even the king could go back and change it.

V9

So, the king signed the law. If this was posted today, and we would be put to certain death if we were caught praying to our God...would you continue praying? Even better question, would this law even affect your prayer life? 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 says, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you". How are we praying without ceasing if a decree such as this doesn't affect us?

V10-11 His Decision

Daniel has to decide, what is more important his loyalty to the king who only reigns here on earth or to the King of Kings who reigns over everything. We are expected to obey our government and local authorities but not if they are testing the law of God. This is a lot like how my mom taught me back when I was in school. She told me to never start a fight, walk away, talk our way through it, deal with the problems the best we could. But if those things did not solve it and the other person insisted on violence, then I better not let them just whoop me. She taught me to stand up for myself, she told me that I would get in trouble in school, but I would not be in trouble at home. She also told me that if I laid there and didn't try to defend myself, I would get it again when I got home. I am happy to say I have never been in a fight, but I'm glad my mom instilled that in me. You can't tell kids that these days, if they even think about fighting, everyone gets suspended.

Daniel knows what the punishment is if he goes against the king's decree, but his Father makes it clear that as long as Daniel listens to Him, he won't be in any trouble when he gets home.

Some people may think that it is too dangerous to risk getting caught, I mean we have so much to do here on earth. Bake sales, fund raisers, mission work, what good would I be if I was dead? God needs me. He will understand; people know my heart, they know I am faithful. It will be ok if I cease praying instead of praying without ceasing.

What does Daniel decide to do? He continues just as if the decree never was even mentioned. No more or less prayer but continues just as he always has. It may seem like he may have been trying to hide a little bit, says he went to his upstairs room. Daniel's prayer life was not like that of the pharisees, out in the open for everyone to see. It was private, it was intimate with God. There are a few things listed as how he prayed. 1. He Prayed facing Jerusalem; this was so he could remember the place of sacrifice. 2. On his knees, this is how Jesus prayed. Kneeling is a posture of begging, who in here is a beggar? 3. 3 times a day, it is hard telling how often Daniel talked with God, but 3 times a day he formally went to the Lord in Prayer. 4. Gave thanks, Spurgeon said "Prayer and praise should always go up to heaven arm in arm, like twin angels walking up Jacob's ladder, or like kindred aspirations soaring up to the Most High."

V12-13

They finally caught Daniel breaking the law, a law they had to lie about to get instated and now they lie even more to really set the hook. They say that Daniel pays no attention to his law, that he doesn't respect the king. This could not be further from the truth; Daniel fully respected the king and meant no disrespect towards the king but would not hide his higher respect for God.

V14

Darius knew that this was his mistake, he was wrongfully talked into something that he should have seen right through from the beginning. We oftentimes are talked into things that we should see right through. The world has its way of finding the things that we are blinded to, things that we can't say no to, things that if we stepped back and looked at the bigger picture, we would see what was really going on. One huge difference that we have is when we fall in those pitfalls we have a miraculously merciful God that is willing to step in and pull us from the muck.

The king worked all the way to the very last minute to find a way to get Daniel out of this. Their custom was that the sentencing was to be carried out by the end of the day that the accusation was confirmed.

There was nothing he could do, the decree was irreversible and even though the king knew it was his fault and not Daniels, the execution could not be overturned.

What does your demeanor say about who controls your life? What decision will you make when faced with deceitful threats? Will you decide to save yourself here, or stand up for yourself and be sure that you won't be in trouble when you get home?