

Daniel 6

Living an Uncompromising Life

For all of you who have traveled to foreign countries, especially those where life is hard, isn't it always kind of exciting when your return flight touches down on US soil. Your experience has taught you to see life differently and suddenly you appreciate all the more what you have here. We enjoy that comfortable feeling of being home.

In fact, I remember our last flight to Nicaragua. As the plane touched down on the runway in Managua the Nicaraguans on board (which was everyone but us) all cheered. Even though Nicaragua is desperately poor, these Nicaraguans were glad to be back in their homeland. We enjoy that comfortable feeling of being home.

Philippians 3:20 *...our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.* Sometimes the place we live isn't really home.

For God's people this world is not our home. We live here. We work here, study here, raise our families here, someday we'll be buried here, but as aliens. Strangers. Pilgrims on a journey. For a believer in Jesus Christ our citizenship is in heaven.

Sometimes we forget that, don't we? Sometimes we grasp on to the things of this life as if they were all that mattered. But every once in a while we get a reminder.

In a Washington Post article Michael Weisskopf wrote, "[Pat Robertson's and Jerry Falwell's] followers are largely poor, uneducated, and easy to lead."

Ted Turner, owner of CNN said, "Christians are 'bozos' and Christianity is a religion for losers." Could you imagine if he had said that about any other major world religion.

In his interview in *Playboy* magazine, Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura said, "Organized religion is a sham and a crutch for weak-minded people who need strength in numbers. It tells people to go out and stick their noses in other people's business."

Since those comments caused a uproar a spokesman later tried to clarify that

Ventura only meant “evangelical Christians. The reason? “The governor hates intolerance.”

Jesse Jackson proclaimed, “The Christian Coalition was a strong force in [Nazi] Germany. It laid down the subtle scientific, theological rationale for the tragedy there.” Pretty amazing feat for an organization formed 30 years after WW2.

Samuel Kent is a federal judge in Texas. He ruled in a graduation prayer case that no student could pray in the name of Jesus. His exact words were, “And make no mistake, the court is going to have a United States marshal in attendance at the graduation. If the student offends this court, that student will be summarily arrested and will face up to six months incarceration in the Galveston County Jail for contempt of Court. Anyone who thinks I’m kidding about this better think again. Anyone who violates these orders, no kidding, is going to wish that he or she had died as a child when this court gets through with it.”

Reggie Rivers, writing in the August 4, 1998 *Rocky Mountain Times* wrote: “I can periodically understand the frustration and general fatigue that compelled the Romans to throw select Christians to the lions. It’s not just that the lions were hungry; it was that the Romans were tired of listening to the self-righteous babbling of Christians who claimed to be experts on everything and had egos the size of...well, God.”

In 1996 evolutionary scientist Richard Dawkins was named Humanist of the Year by the American Humanist Association. In his acceptance speech he compared the threat of AIDS and “mad cow disease” to the threat of faith. He said faith is “one of the world’s great evils, comparable to smallpox but harder to eradicate.” So much for tolerance.

The hostility in our world, especially against Biblical Christianity, is growing. Every once in a while the curtain is pulled back and we see that hostility unmasked.

How then are we to live? How are we to function in a world that is not really home to our faith, our morals, our values, or our Savior?

For an example of a man who lived an uncompromising life in a land that wasn’t his home turn with me to the **Book of Daniel, Chapter 6. Pg 863**

Many years pass between the the time that Daniel was carried off to Babylon and the beginning of chapter six. Nebuchadnezzar is now off the scene. Babylon has been defeated by the Medo-Persian empire. Belshazzar has come and gone. Darius heads up the leading world power of the day.

When we started our study, Daniel was taken into captivity in his mid teens. Now he's in his eighties.

It's a mistake to think that spiritual battles are all faced in the early years of Christian experience. Young people don't face all the temptations. They don't stop until we're with the Lord.

I. Integrity Should be the Hallmark of Every Christian **Read vs 1-3**

The word "Darius" is similar to the Egyptian "Pharaoh." It wasn't a name but a title. There were at least 5 Persian rulers with the title Darius which means "owner of the scepter."

This one, whose name was actually Gubaru, wasted no time organizing the political system in Babylon.

This Darius was reputed to have been an administrative genius. He selected and appointed "120 satraps," or governors, to rule throughout the kingdom. The term satrap actually means "a kingdom protector." To guarantee adequate accountability, Darius appointed "three administrators" over these 120 governors. It was their responsibility to make sure all of these men carried out their tasks in an efficient and honest manner. that way he could avoid both waste and graft. The new government was highly centralized in terms of supervision but decentralized in terms of function.

Darius certainly conducted a background check on all of these new leaders- particularly on the men who were to be his three key administrators. It wouldn't take long to discover Daniel's credentials. He had served in high positions in the Babylonian government since he was seventeen years old. His reputation as a man of wisdom was outstanding, and his character was impeccable. Though he was a foreigner, he had demonstrated incredible loyalty to his superiors and had performed his tasks commendably.

Remember too that Darius would have quickly learned what had happened at Belshazzar's feast. When all of the wise men of Babylon couldn't read and interpret the handwriting on the palace wall, Daniel could.

And don't forget that before Belshazzar was taken captive and executed, he had appointed Daniel as "the third highest ruler in the kingdom." This in itself would motivate Darius to check out Daniel's background. And when he did, he discovered a man he could trust. In fact he was thinking about making him head administrator.

Integrity Should be the Hallmark of Every Christian. We may not make it all the way to the top in our profession but we ought to be known for our honesty and integrity. Daniel was a stranger in a strange land but he did his job well.

So well that the king wasn't the only one who took notice. **Read vs 4 & 5**

It is clear from the story that Daniel was far superior in ability to his two associates and the king was so impressed that he toyed with the idea of appointing Daniel as the prime minister. That's when the trouble started. In addition to jealousy we need to remember that these men knew that Daniel belonged to an alien race. He wasn't a Mede or a Persian. He was a Jew. It is easy to imagine the thought process of his fellow administrators and governors: "Why should this guy take precedence over us; he's not even one of our countrymen."

They began to watch Daniel like a hawk, but to their great frustration he was "squeaky-clean." Human nature hasn't changed much in 2500 years. In so many countries of the world the only way to get anywhere or to get permission for something is to slip an official a bribe. But Daniel would not touch that kind of thing. So try as they may, his colleagues couldn't find any trace of negligence or of improper dealings.

What a testimony to have, not from friends who might be a little more tolerant and turn a blind eye to some imperfection, but from enemies on the lookout for some fault. The reluctant conclusion of all of this close scrutiny of Daniel's conduct was, "they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful."

How do we match up against that kind of standard? Personal integrity isn't only a trait of believers. There are plenty of non-Christians who are upright in character, but how much more should Christians be beyond reproach.

The administrators came to the conclusion that any attempt to prove disloyalty, corruption or negligence by Daniel was doomed to failure. If they were going to find any way of trapping him, it must be in some other direction. It was the same when the Lord Jesus was brought before his judges - he was without fault. What an honor! What a standard for us to follow!

The philosophy of these guys was, if you can't find fault then "play the religious card." If they were going to find some way of trapping him, it must be in relation to his faith. If we are Christians, whether we like it or not, we are marked people, we are under observation.

Right from the beginning of their history, the people of Israel were set apart from the surrounding nations because they were given a different set of values through God's revelation to them - he had chosen them by his grace to be a light for all others. Even though they often failed miserably they were hated for being different. In the case of Daniel, it was his purity of life which couldn't avoid giving offence to his contemporaries because he showed them up for what they were.

In 1998 Focus on the Family started their "Truth-in-Love" campaign in major newspapers all across the country. One featured a photo of over 800 former homosexuals with this headline: "We're standing for the truth that homosexuals can change." Underneath the picture it read, "We believe every human being is precious to God and is entitled to respect. But when we see great suffering among homosexuals, it's an inherent Christian calling to show compassion and concern."

About the same time two thugs took the life of a homosexual college student named Matt Shepherd. On NBC's Today, co-host Katie Couric used the occasion to slam the "Truth-in-Love" campaign that encouraged homosexuals to turn to faith in Jesus Christ. Couric asked Elizabeth Birch of the Human Rights Campaign: "Do you believe this ad campaign launched by some conservative groups really contributed somehow to Matthew Shepard's death?" Birch quickly replied "I do, Katie. . . . This ad campaign has been pumped out all summer presenting gay and lesbian people as defective, as less than, as not fully human."

The City of San Francisco Board of Supervisors wrote: "It's not an exaggeration to say that there's a direct correlation between these acts of discrimination, like

Matthew Shephard, such as when gays and lesbians are called sinful, and when major religious organizations say they can change if they try, and the horrible crimes committed against gays and lesbians.”

Focus on the Family and the other groups involved demonstrated only the highest ethical standards. Their integrity couldn't be questioned. But the very fact that they taught God's truth in love made them a target.

Daniel became a target. His integrity couldn't be discounted. But still he was hated.

Then the governors had an idea. **Read vs 6-9**

They were appealing to Darius' ego. They were applying a coat of flattery to his pride. Years ago there was an old TV show called "Queen for a Day." They would take an ordinary lady and load her down with all kinds of gifts like a washing machine, a vacuum cleaner, and a dishwasher, hand her a dozen roses and crown her queen for a day. . . . Well, Darius was already king, so they said, "King we want you to be 'god for a month.'"

Darius liked the sound of that, so he signed the paper.

King Darius was a mixed-up character. He had the good sense to promote Daniel to the top job in the kingdom but didn't have the insight to see the hatred that Daniel's fellow governors had for him.

The men who plotted against Daniel did not want to have his blood on their hands. They would not want to be branded as assassins. They figured out how to lay the death of Daniel at the door of the king. The plan was to take advantage of a change in the law so that Daniel could be condemned to death. It was all carefully planned, so that "the system" would do for them what they couldn't do themselves.

Darius was completely taken in by their flattery that no one should be allowed to pray, except to him alone, for thirty days under penalty of death. It was to be under a law which when made could not be revoked. What a responsibility people in authority have.

Now we might wonder why God would allow all this to happen to Daniel. Here he was, a man of God, a man who stood out for decades as a faithful servant of God.

2TH 2:7 “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work”

1JO 4:3 “the spirit of the Antichrist ... is now already in the world.”

The mystery of lawlessness lies in the fact that through the mystery of freedom given by God to his created beings, to respond in love, liberty and joy, there has arisen a reaction which is satanic.

It has no place in God's original purpose or in his final triumph, but is allowed to work its havoc until the time of its final destruction. Daniel found himself caught up between the wicked schemers and a morally weak king. It is a repeat of the principle seen in the life of Joseph whose brothers tried to kill him, and it finds its culminating expression in the cross of the Lord Jesus himself, where we can identify ourselves with the guilty parties.

The NT explains that Jesus Christ came to die for the sins of the world. We're all guilty when we stand before God. We're the reason Christ died.

Because God has given freedom there is opportunity for lawlessness. We have all “sinned and come short of the glory of God.” In fact “The wages of sin is death.” Jesus said hell “was created for the devil and his angels” but it's the place where everyone goes who isn't saved.

Jesus Christ died for our sins (took our judgment) and the scriptural command is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved...” Even Daniel needed a Savior.

But his trust was in Jehovah God. He was like Abraham. Gen 15:6 Abraham “believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” Daniel knew the God of his salvation. He was eternally grateful to God and wanted to serve Him. His fellow governors didn't share his faith and they conspired against him.

I. Integrity Should be the Hallmark of Every Christian

II. Prayer Should be the Passion of Every Christian

Read vs 10-11

Owen Bourgaize writes; "We are told that Daniel kept his windows open "towards Jerusalem." There is a lovely symbolism here. It speaks to us of an attitude towards God. Daniel's heart and soul were opened God-ward. So often our souls are facing the "Babylon" of life - we're bogged down with the problems and perplexities of life, and we forget the great God whom we love and worship, the God who is on the throne. Facing Jerusalem was a conscious act of faith in God that he would work out his purposes even though outward circumstances were far from favorable."

Daniel made the decision that he would just keep on praying the way he had always prayed. He decided that it was more important to please the God of heaven rather than the law of man.

This is the second time in this book that a child of God commits civil disobedience. That is, he refused to obey the law of the land. Remember, in chapter three, the king commanded that everyone had to bow down to a graven image. The three Hebrew young men conscientiously refused to obey. That's an example of when man's government tells you to do something that God's word forbids: idolatry. But this example is just the opposite - it's where man's government tells a child of God that he can't do what God has commanded him to do: Pray.

Daniel carefully considers the consequences-and he breaks the law-he prays anyway. He doesn't put on a public display. He doesn't try to make it a big issue, he just prays the same way he always has.

I can't predict what will happen in the next few years, but if the trend continues, government is going to infringe more and more on our God-given right to pray by telling us where, when, and how we may or may not pray. My advice is: pray anyway. But be prepared to face the consequences. Don't ever be afraid to pray publicly, but make sure you aren't doing for show, and make sure it arises out of a faithful, consistent, private prayer life.

That's what Daniel did. He went to his room and opened the windows toward Jerusalem. He wasn't ashamed to be seen or heard praying. This was a spiritual sting operation; he had been "set up." They were there, and they caught him

praying. His prayer, even though it was against the law, made a powerful statement about his devotion to God.

Prayer Should be the Passion of Every Christian

We need to ask ourselves honestly: how important is prayer to us? If suddenly our government issued a law saying we couldn't pray for 30 days, how many of us would passionately miss it? Verses 10 and 11 give us some important information about prayer. If your prayer life isn't all that it should be, learn from Daniel's example.

1. He had a specific place

Daniel had a place where he prayed, his room. He opened the windows toward Jerusalem. During this time, Jerusalem was only a pile of rubble. But he wasn't praying to Jerusalem, he was praying in faith to the God whom he believed could rebuild Jerusalem.

It helps to have a designated place to have a quiet time with God.

2. He had a regular time

Daniel had a regular schedule of prayer. He prayed three times a day, probably based on Psalm 55:17 which says, "Evening, morning, and noon I cry out in distress and He hears my voice." The Jewish day began with sunset, that's why he started by saying evening.

For most of us our day begins in the morning. That's a good time to start. Have a regular time set aside to meet the Lord in prayer. If you don't think you have time to do it in the morning, try setting your clock 15 minutes earlier. Get up, find a place to be alone. Read a psalm and then start talking to God. Set that time as your regular prayer time, you'll be amazed at the difference it will make in your life.

3. He had a devoted posture

Notice that Daniel got down on his knees. Remember he was now in his eighties! (Actually all the people in their 80's that I know tell me its not the getting down that's hard, its the getting back up!) The Bible doesn't command us to kneel

when we pray. There are several prayer postures mentioned in the Bible, kneeling, eyes uplifted to heaven, standing, arms raised or a combination of them.

You can pray in any posture, of course, but we have scriptural support that praying on your knees is a good posture. It shows real humility. Try it for yourself and see.

4. He had a consistent habit

The most important thing these two verses say about Daniel's prayer life is found in the last seven words of verse 10, "as was his custom since early days." That means for Daniel, prayer was a regular, consistent habit. It wasn't some kind of emergency mode that he resorted to when trouble came. He prayed regularly every day.

There are good habits and there are plenty of bad habits. We need to make sure we get into the good habit of praying every single day. I promise you Satan will do everything within his power to keep you from praying.

I can just picture Daniel in his bedroom. He knows the law was passed. In his bedroom, he's struggling with all his excuses he could make to get around this new law. He's thinking how he should pray and debating about the lions' den. BUT I THINK HIS BEDROOM WAS THE REAL LIONS' DEN. That is where the real battle was. He battled on his knees alone with God. When he went into the den, the battle was over. The bedroom was where the real battle was. The battle was over when he was alone with God, for he practiced for 80 years. After 80 years of prayer, he knew, 'If I stop praying, I stop breathing. I'm as good as a dead man. Might as well die!' and he willingly went into the lions' den.

Read vs 12-15

Notice in vs 13 how they get in their dig; "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah." He's a Jew from a nation that was conquered almost 70 years ago. They are vindictive but the king is grieved. He tries his best to undo things but he's bound by his own hastily made law.

I. Integrity Should Be the Hallmark of Every Christian

II. Prayer Should Be the Passion of Every Christian

III. Peace Will Be the Reward of Every Faithful Christian

Read vs 16-18

David Jeremiah, in his book "Handwriting on the Wall" gives his version of what might have happened next, Only our imaginations can take us into that den. We find out later there weren't pussy cats down there, because of what eventually happened to Daniel's accusers. When the guards slammed the door shut on the opening and affixed the seal, Daniel slid to the floor of the den. With an ear-shattering roar, the huge cats came bounding from their caverns and skidded to a stop as if a powerful hand had reigned them abruptly. Their roars began to fade as they formed a solid wall of fur around this alien intruder, some sniffing at his feet and others gradually nuzzling his side. Others turned with an indifferent snort and ambled back to their caverns.

Daniel slumped down, completely exhausted after his nerve-wracking experience, and prayed a prayer of thanksgiving to Jehovah for his deliverance. He leaned back against the wall to make himself comfortable for the night, but the dungeon was damp and chilly. Two lion cubs moved in his direction, not crouching for an attack, but with obvious friendliness.

They nestled close to him, providing him with warmth, cushioning his body in their soft fur. An old lioness crept over and lay in front of him; he stroked their backs and they licked his hand. Soon the head of the old patriarch was pillowed by one of the cubs, and the four slept soundly in perfect peace and tranquility. But poor Darius tossed and turned on his comfortable bed, wracked with guilt and fear.

Early the next morning we are rushed into the next scene. **Read 20-23**

Of all God's creatures, the lion is one of the most beautiful, fearsome, awesome creatures. That's one reason why the Bible uses this symbol to describe the Lord Jesus.

Rev. 5:5 "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed..." Daniel told Darius God sent "His angel" to close the mouths of the lions. I believe that angel was the "angel of the Lord," the very same "angel" that walked with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. The preincarnate Christ visited the lion's pit as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Lions are very group oriented. They live and hunt in prides. In each pride there is always a dominant male. What he does the others do. When he sleeps, the rest sleep. When he hunts, the others hunt. When he eats, they all eat. This dominate male, often called the Alpha Male, is in charge until a new male comes along and challenges and drives him off.

I believe on that evening when Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, there was new boss of the Pride: the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Let me ask you: who had more peace that night, Daniel in the pit of lions or Darius in the palace? Darius had his own lions to fight: the lion of conscience, the lion of guilt, the lion of accusation. He didn't sleep a wink. What's the difference? Daniel was in touch with the real King; the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who is also called the Prince of Peace. So here was Daniel, resting comfortably, peace in the midst of pressure, while Darius stays up all night fighting his own personal lions.

Which scene best describes your life right now? Yeah, there are going to be lions. Sure, you will be thrown into the pit, but when it happens, make sure you are in touch with the Dominant Lion, the One who can give you peace in midst of pressure.

Jesus said in John 16:33, "I have spoken these words unto you so that in me you might have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But be of good cheer! I have overcome [dominated] the world."

Read vs 24

Deliverance for Daniel. Judgment for his enemies. The chapter ends with Darius making what looks to me like a statement of real faith in Jehovah God.

But to me, the saddest part of the story was the judgment that fell on Daniel's accusers. What was the difference between Daniel and these people? What is the key to having peace in the lion's pit instead of being destroyed?

Here's the difference: Daniel had a living, personal, relationship with the God of heaven. I mean, Daniel carried on a conversation with the God of the Universe three times a day, and when he found himself in the pit, God was there! These

men and their families didn't know God. And there was no peace for them, only agony.

Listen to me carefully. According to Scripture if you don't know Jesus Christ, there will be no one to deliver you through the painful lion's den experiences of life. One of these days, you will find yourself in the pit of sickness, but there will be no peace.

One of these days, you will find yourself in the pit of loneliness, but there will be deliverance.

One of these days you will face the pit of death, but there will be no God to resurrect you.

And God forbid, that you should enter into the pit of hell, and there will be no God to open the door of heaven.

God in His grace gives us a choice. You have a choice this morning. Which lion will you choose? Will you choose to listen to the roaring lion, Satan and his plan for your life? Or will you choose the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus. When you trust Christ as Savior there is always ultimate deliverance for whatever pit this world may throw you into. For what ever lion you face. Won't you trust Him today?