

DANIEL 6



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Daniel 6

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Cover art: Rembrandt, *Daniel in the Lions' Den*

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Daniel 6: Introduction

Fast forward to a new empire and a new king. But for Daniel, it's the same old story: Excellence in service, and jealousy and hatred from his colleagues.

Daniel's enemies concoct a plan to bring him down, based on his faithfulness to God in prayer. It works.

Well, sort of. They manage to get Daniel arrested for violating a foolish statute, but it all backfires on them when God intervenes to deliver His faithful servant. Like I said: same old story.

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1 Same Old Story

Introduction

Daniel was unchanged and unaffected by the regime change which occurred in Babylon. His reputation had doubtless preceded him, and Darius preserved him from the fate of Belshazzar and his court. We are not surprised that Daniel was established in a place of authority in the Persian Empire. Nor are we surprised that some people hated him for it. Stand firm for Jesus and His Word, and even some of your brothers and sisters in Christ won't like you. Ask Joseph. Every time I read this chapter, I can't help hearing the lines from Paul Simon's "Keep the Customer Satisfied": "It's the same old story: everywhere I go, I get slandered, libeled, I hear words I never heard in the Bible..."

Read Genesis 37.

Read Daniel 6.1-5.

Think it Through

1. Darius continued Daniel in a role of great responsibility in the Persian Empire. How would you describe that role (vv. 1, 2). It's clear that he, and those associated with him, knew of Daniel's faith in God (cf. v. 6). Why would Darius elevate a man like this? Daniel was not one to be quiet about his faith, or to refuse to speak out against any injustices he saw around him. At the same time, he was very skilled in the work appointed to him (v. 3). Comment on what we can learn from Daniel about bearing witness to the Lord by our lives *and* our words. What can we do to become more consistent in this?

2. There will always be people who don't like us. What reasons might people – neighbors, co-workers, even fellow Christians – have for not liking us? Certain people didn't like Daniel, but was Daniel to blame? Why didn't his co-workers like him? We need to make sure that the people who don't like us don't like us for the right reasons. Explain.

Meditate

"Normally, in fact, those entrusted with kingship or any other rule confide least in the people closest to their predecessors; but Daniel enjoyed the same trust from all, receiving equal privileges and being entrusted with the same governance—hence, of course, his becoming one of the three supervisors under Darius. Now, by 'supervisors' I think there is reference to what are now called viceroys, and by 'satraps' to the governors of the nations, Daniel being one of the supervisors." *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin." John 15:18-22

Father, let me not fear what others might think of me, say about me, or do to me. Help me to grow as Your witness, and in all that my calling requires so that, like Daniel, I might...

Pray Psalm 66.1-3.

Pray that the people around you might see the works of God in you, and give Him thanks and praise.

Psalm 66.1-4 (*Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Shout for joy to God, all people, sing the glory of His Name!

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Give Him glorious praise and say, "How great Your pow'r and great Your fame!
All the earth shall worship gladly as they praise Your glorious Name!"

2 Evil Loves Company

Introduction

Envy, jealousy, resentment, hatred – these affections can often be found traveling together. When they meet an agreeable spirit in others, they can overrule sound thinking and contrive vicious schemes against the source of their discontent. But, as Haman learned the hard way – and Darius’ counselors would learn soon enough – vicious plots have a way of backfiring, especially when they are aimed at doing harm to the people of God (Prov. 26.27).

Read Esther 3.

Read Daniel 6.6-9.

Think it Through

1. We don’t know which of these administrators first concocted the idea of taking indirect action against Daniel. Probably more than one of them laid up late at night, thinking about how to be done with this Hebrew governor. At some point, someone came up with a plan, and they couldn’t wait to enlist Darius himself in their wicked scheme. The Aramaic verb here translated “thronged” – *ragash* – suggests a tumultuous urgency. How do you envision this scene? What does this suggest about the hearts of these men? What is the effect of jealousy, envy, and resentment on sound thinking? How can you know when such affections are making inroads to your heart? What should you do, so that you don’t do something foolish, something you’ll regret, like these Persian administrators?

2. The genius behind this action was that it appealed to Darius’ pride. How can you see that? Evil affections, sown by the father of lies, look to connect with other evil affections – those lingering in the soul, and the evil affections in the hearts of others. Misery loves company, but so do bad feelings and evil designs. The law of sin is at work in all of us, and keeps its bag of tricks at the ready, for when we’re not paying attention (Rom. 7.21-23). Darius was happy to go along with their plan. Why? How can you guard against the evil affections that you sense in others connecting with lingering evil in your own heart?

Meditate

“In surrendering their mind’s eye to envy, they did not understand that the king could not supply everything to petitioners, like health, life, fathering children, abundance of rain and anything else that we receive when we ask it of God. Losing their senses, however, they ascribed to the king what belongs to God and persuaded the foolish king to reach the same verdict and ratify their request.” *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” Awake to righteousness, and do not sin... 1 Corinthians 15.33, 34

Let me not be influenced by the self-centered desires of others, O Lord, and help me to keep my own wicked affections in check as I...

Pray Psalm 66.16-20.

Recite all the things that God has done for your soul, and confess any wicked affections or thoughts which may be lingering there.

Psalm 66.13-20 (*Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

To Your house we come with offerings, what we vowed, Lord, help us do.

O, receive our praise and homage as we give ourselves to You.

Come and listen, all who fear Him: hear what this great God can do!

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When we cried to You, You answered, filled our mouths with highest praise.
Let not sin abide within us, lest we languish all our days.
Bless the Lord, Who hears our pleadings and preserves His love always.

3 Undeterred

Introduction

King Darius had overstepped his bounds. By insisting on *when* people could pray, and *making himself* the focus of prayer, if only for 30 days, he abused his God-given office and usurped the prerogatives of God. When government does that, not only must it not be obeyed, it must be disobeyed. The Hebrew midwives understood this, and they were blessed of God. No doubt Daniel was banking on their example as he took up his own act of civil disobedience to maintain obedience to God. The king had spoken; but Daniel, since he served another King, was undeterred.

Read Exodus 1.15-21.

Read Daniel 6.10.

Think it Through

1. Our text stresses that Daniel knew about this wicked law that Darius had been flattered into signing. Do you think it's a good idea to keep up on the laws, regulations, and court rulings of civil governments, especially as these may have a bearing on the practice of our faith? Explain. Daniel *knew* this law, and then went directly to disobey it. Wait a second: What about Romans 13.1-4? How can we reconcile Daniel's action and Paul's teaching? What is the key phrase in Romans 13.4?

2. Daniel can teach us about prayer, both here and, as we shall see, in subsequent chapters. First, let's remember that Daniel was one of three governors of the Persian Empire (vv. 1, 2). We can imagine that he was a very busy man. But this did not prevent him from praying three times a day, every day ("as he had been doing previously"). Meditate on Psalm 55.16, 17. Is there some advantage to having set times like this for prayer? Next, we note that Daniel had a *specific place* for prayer, and he assumed a *particular posture* as he prayed. How can these help us in our prayers? Finally, we note that his prayer consisted of "praying and giving thanks before his God". Why was it important to mention both these practices? What can you learn from Daniel to improve your own practice of prayer?

Meditate

"Note how much this verse implied in a few words in mentioning the piety and courage of blessed Daniel. First, when Daniel learned that the decision has been reached, 'he went into his house'—that is, when he got news of the passing of the law, he had great scorn for it and continued openly doing the opposite. It next mentions a further detail that reveals his courage: the windows were open, it says—in other words, he said his prayers not in secret but openly, with everyone watching, not for vainglory but in scorn for the impiety of the law." *Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD)*

So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4.18-20

Lord, I need to set my mind, today and every day, so that nothing men or governments say, do, or threaten will keep me from bearing witness to Jesus. To that end, today help me to...

Pray Psalm 66.8-15.

We may be tried, burdened, opposed, and oppressed at times, but we must still come to the Lord and offer ourselves as living sacrifices to Him.

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Psalm 66.5-16 (*Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Great and awesome is our Savior in the works which He has done.
He the sea and river dried to let His people cross as one.
Then our joy was great to worship Him our mighty, sovereign One.

He the nations watches ever – all you rebels, humbled be;
Bless our God, all men and nations, praise His Name eternally!
He preserves our souls, and He will keep His paths beneath our feet.

You have tried us, Lord, as silver, and have brought us into nets,
Made us carry heavy burdens, let men trample o'er our heads.
But through all Your grace sustained us and has brought us through to rest.

To Your house we come with offerings, what we vowed, Lord, help us do.
O, receive our praise and homage as we give ourselves to You.
Come and listen, all who fear Him: hear what this great God can do!

4 Gotcha!

Introduction

As I read about those administrators skulking around Daniel's apartment and breaking in on the king, I can't help but think about John Cleese in that red robe, bursting into a room with his henchmen as the Spanish Inquisition, in effect saying, "Gotcha!" to some unwitting victim (*Monty Python's Flying Circus*). These administrators must have been very pleased with themselves, for they managed a double "Gotcha!" – on both Daniel and Darius. Enjoy it while you can. Years later, Haman would too, but then...

Read Esther 3 and 6.1-9.

Read Daniel 6.11-17.

Think it through

1. His administrators reminded Darius of the law he had signed (vv. 11, 12). Did they think he'd forgotten? Why did they consider it important to have Darius affirm that law? Is there a lesson for us from Darius' allowing himself to be flattered into this hasty act? What affections do you imagine the king was feeling in verses 13 and 14? When such affections arise within us, what must we do?

2. Darius, for all his ego, was a decent fellow. He knew he could not undo the law he'd signed, but he also knew that what these administrators had done was unjust. He "was greatly displeased with himself". Why? Yet he was bound by his own law, so that he could do nothing other than comply with it. His administrators goaded him further (v. 15), and the king had no choice but to order the punishment (v. 16). What do you make of Darius' comment to Daniel in verse 16? The final phrase in verse 17 is fraught: "that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed." A double meaning is intended here, I think. Explain.

Meditate

"He sealed with his ring the rock by which the opening of the pit was shut up, so that the enemies of Daniel might not make any attempt to harm him. For he had entrusted him to the power of God, and although not worried about lions, he was fearful of men." *Jerome (347-420 AD)*

But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live." But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god. Acts 28.3-6

Lord, nothing can separate me from Your love, not the anger of people, not even death. Give me courage for this day, to serve You faithfully by...

Pray Psalm 66.16-20

As you pray, set your mind and heart to live for Christ today, and to make the most of every opportunity to be His witness.

Psalm 66.13-20 (*Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

To Your house we come with offerings, what we vowed, Lord, help us do.

O, receive our praise and homage as we give ourselves to You.

Come and listen, all who fear Him: hear what this great God can do!

When we cried to You, You answered, filled our mouths with highest praise.

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Let not sin abide within us, lest we languish all our days.
Bless the Lord, Who hears our pleadings and preserves His love always.

5 Able to Deliver

Introduction

Darius hoped that Daniel's God would be able to deliver him from the mouths of the lions. He would not be disappointed. God, Who sent His angel to make a donkey open its mouth and speak, could certainly send an angel to shut the mouths of lions.

Read Numbers 22.22-35.

Read Daniel 6.18-23.

Think it Through

1. How would you describe Darius' state of mind as he retired to bed for the night? What was causing this distress? Why? What was it about Daniel that made Darius so anxious for him? What did Darius know about Daniel's faith? What do the lost people in your Personal Mission Field know about yours?
2. Daniel reported that God had sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions. Why did He need to do that? Or is it a matter of "need"? Meditate on Acts 12.5-11 and Revelation 7.1-3. Do angels have a role in the operations of the material world? Explain. How would you explain the relationship between Daniel's faith in God (v. 23) and God's sovereign operation in sending an angel to deliver him? What is the relationship between divine sovereignty and human faith in God's work of redemption?

Meditate

"See how they were in death itself, Daniel encompassed by the lions, the three children abiding in the furnace, the Israelites, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, in diverse temptations; and yet not even so did they despair. For this is faith. When things are turning out adversely, then we ought to believe nothing adverse is done but all things in due order." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people." Acts 12.11

Lord, surround me and all Your children with holy angels today, that we may with confidence, faith and joy...

Pray Psalm 66.1-16.

As you pray these verses, let the Lord bring some people before your mind, and pray that He will open a door of opportunity for you to share with them, so that you can declare what He has done for your soul.

Psalm 66.1-16 (*Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Shout for joy to God, all people, sing the glory of His Name!

Give Him glorious praise and say, "How great Your pow'r and great Your fame!

All the earth shall worship gladly as they praise Your glorious Name!"

Great and awesome is our Savior in the works which He has done.

He the sea and river dried to let His people cross as one.

Then our joy was great to worship Him our mighty, sovereign One.

He the nations watches ever – all you rebels, humbled be;

Bless our God, all men and nations, praise His Name eternally!

He preserves our souls, and He will keep His paths beneath our feet.

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You have tried us, Lord, as silver, and have brought us into nets,
Made us carry heavy burdens, let men trample o'er our heads.
But through all Your grace sustained us and has brought us through to rest.

To Your house we come with offerings, what we vowed, Lord, help us do.
O, receive our praise and homage as we give ourselves to You.
Come and listen, all who fear Him: hear what this great God can do!

6 Justice and Honor

Introduction

Darius' judgment against Daniel's accusers may seem harsh, but his action has some precedent in the Law of God. But for Darius, achieving justice for Daniel was not enough. He resolved that everyone under his dominion should glorify God for Daniel's deliverance. His proclamation echoes that of Nebuchadnezzar and points the way into Daniel 7.

Meditate on Deuteronomy 19.18-21.

Read Daniel 6.24-28.

Think it Through

1. It is interesting to see Darius applying a statute from the Law of God against Daniel's accusers (although he went beyond what the Law requires). It's not likely he had studied the Law of God in any great detail, and there is no indication of his consulting Daniel as to what he should do with those who bore false witness against him. In his book, *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis wrote about moral principles and guidelines that are common to all human cultures, as if people know intuitively what is right or wrong in certain situations. Meditate on Romans 2.14, 15. How does this help us in understanding Darius' judgment and Lewis' observation? How should this encourage us as we consider ways of bringing more of the holy and righteous and good Law of God to bear in our Christian lives, and on issues of morality, culture, and society in our day (Rom. 7.12)?

2. Darius was right to honor God for delivering Daniel from the lions. Compare Darius' proclamation with that of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4.1-3, 34-37. In what ways are they similar? Yet they differ in one key point (v. 26). Explain. Should civil governments do this? *Can* they actually do this? Why or why not? Should Christians look to politicians to advance their spiritual interests? Explain. Summarize what we have learned thus far from Daniel (2.44, 45), Nebuchadnezzar, and Darius about the Kingdom of God. Verse 28 introduces Cyrus, a successor of Darius. He's going to be pretty important, which you can see by reading Isaiah 44.24 to 45.7 and Ezra 1.1-4.

Meditate

"The foundation and strength of hope and faith is fear. In Psalm 111: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' Of the same thing in the Wisdom of Solomon, ... in the Proverbs, ... in Isaiah, ... in Genesis, ... and in Psalm 2, ... Then Darius the king wrote, 'To all peoples, tribes and languages that are in my kingdom, peace be to you from my face. I decree and ordain that all those who are in my kingdom shall fear and tremble before the Most High God whom Daniel serves.'" *Cyprian of Carthage (fl. 248-258 AD)*

"...for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them..." Romans 2.14, 15

Lord, do I "fear and tremble" before You as I should? Show me how to fear You, that I might be wise; and help me to love You more, that I...

Pray Psalm 66.1-16.

Pray for the people in your Personal Mission Field, letting the words of this psalm guide you in thinking about each one you will see today.

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Psalm 66.1-16 (*Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Shout for joy to God, all people, sing the glory of His Name!
Give Him glorious praise and say, "How great Your pow'r and great Your fame!
All the earth shall worship gladly as they praise Your glorious Name!"

Great and awesome is our Savior in the works which He has done.
He the sea and river dried to let His people cross as one.
Then our joy was great to worship Him our mighty, sovereign One.

He the nations watches ever – all you rebels, humbled be;
Bless our God, all men and nations, praise His Name eternally!
He preserves our souls, and He will keep His paths beneath our feet.

You have tried us, Lord, as silver, and have brought us into nets,
Made us carry heavy burdens, let men trample o'er our heads.
But through all Your grace sustained us and has brought us through to rest.

To Your house we come with offerings, what we vowed, Lord, help us do.
O, receive our praise and homage as we give ourselves to You.
Come and listen, all who fear Him: hear what this great God can do!

7 Through Many Tribulations

Introduction

The apostle Paul advised us that we must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14.21, 22). Do you suppose he learned that from contemplating Daniel's experience in Babylon and Persia? Daniel undoubtedly knew of the Biblical teaching about God's Kingdom, reaching all the way back to Genesis 49. In chapter 7, he will be treated to a spectacular and exhilarating vision of the Kingdom's coming to God's saints. I'm certain that, as he took in that vision, he would have been persuaded that his "many tribulations" were worth it. Ours are, too.

Read Genesis 49.8-11.

Read and Meditate on Daniel 6.

Think it Through

1. God as King has been a central, albeit subdued, theme of the book of Daniel to this point. He rules, but as it were from afar. Explain. How do we see in the story of Darius and the lions' den that God is King over all people, nations, and indeed all creation? Can you see in Daniel's tribulations any foreshadowing of the sufferings of Jesus?
2. The book of Daniel was written shortly before the exiles returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Why would the message of God's Kingship have been important to them as they returned? Why was it important that this message be proclaimed, not merely by one of their own prophets, but by two of the greatest pagan kings of their day? How should the coming of the Kingdom encourage us in our daily walk with and work for the Lord?

Meditate

"They sealed the pit of Daniel and guarded it with diligence; and they guarded the grave of Jesus with diligence, as they said, 'Set guards to watch at the tomb.' When Daniel came up, his accusers were ashamed; and when Jesus rose, all they who had crucified him were ashamed." *Aphrahat (270-350 AD)*

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." Acts 14.21, 22

Lord, I know the world does not always regard Your Kingdom and salvation as Good News. But I know it is, and so...

Pray Psalm 66

As you pray, ask the Lord to revive the witness of His people, to remove His judgment from us, and to send us out to proclaim the Kingdom and Rule of Jesus throughout our community and the world.

Psalm 66 (*Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Shout for joy to God, all people, sing the glory of His Name!
Give Him glorious praise and say, "How great Your pow'r and great Your fame!
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Great and awesome is our Savior in the works which He has done.
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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What are you learning about the Kingdom of God from Daniel?
2. Meditate on John 5.39. How can you see the story of Jesus foreshadowed in the book of Daniel?
3. God is Lord of creation. How does this lead us to think about creation, and our responsibility for it?
4. Is God still King of all nations and peoples? How should this encourage us in our walk with and work for Him?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.