



## Daniel 6:1-28

### Uncompromising Faith

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Christians today, as they always have been, are under a tremendous amount of pressure to conform to society. It is far more common for Christians to mix in with this pagan world in a manner that their presence is almost undetectable than it is for a Christian to stand out. Like Peter, who promised to defend Christ, yet denied Him three times during His passion, we find it easier to hide our faith when its exposure could cost us something. Is God honored by fair-weather Christians who deny Him when difficult times come? Is God pleased by those of His children who wear His name and sing His praises in church on Sunday morning, but all but ignore Him during the week when they look and sound like the pagan world around them?

Since faith is by choice, our response to our faith is also based upon choices. God does not stand over us and force us to conform to His purposes for our lives. Consequently, we tend to yield to other forces rather than stand firm in our faith. There are many ways that we yield to these forces. We allow opportunities for sharing the Gospel through God's love to pass us by when we turn our back on the needs of those around us. Few Christians openly share their faith; as their testimony is muffled by their apathy towards the lost. Many Christians give a priority to their faith that is a clear second to the priority that they place on their own personal desires. Consequently, many have a faith that does not stand tall when tested.

What are some of the events in your past that truly tested your faith? For most of us, those tests may not demand a lot of sacrifice, possibly no more than giving a kind word or a meal to someone who is in need. Sometimes we are tested in our places of employment when those who have authority over us would demand that we take part in that which the Spirit reveals to us is not an appropriate expression of faith.

Rarely are Christians who live in western cultures faced with tests of our faith that are life-threatening, but such events are commonplace in other places in the world. We can find encouragement and guidance in a similar experience from the life of Daniel, who was a young man when he and other Judeans from Jerusalem were taken into exile to Chaldee of Babylon by its king, Nebuchadnezzar. The story of Daniel and his salvation from the den of lions is one of the most well-known Old-Testament events, often retold in children's stories and songs. However, what took place is anything but child's play.

**Daniel 6:1. *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;***

The nation of Israel, the progeny of the sons of Jacob, formed in Egyptian slavery, was brought miraculously to the promised land of Canaan approximately 800 years before Daniel's generation. God had promised to protect them and keep them in the land as long as they honored Him as their God, and His continued presence was made known during that entire period in the pillar of fire and cloud that stood over the tabernacle. However, the nation was characterized by a desire to "be like the nations"<sup>1</sup> and adopted the pagan traditions of the world in which they found themselves immersed. Fighting among themselves, the nation split into two when Rehoboam, king of Judah, son of Solomon, the third king of united Israel threatened to enslave its citizens in order to escalate his father's building projects. The ten break-away tribes formed the northern nation of Israel who never in its history turned to God in faith. Likewise the southern nation of Judah also turned away from God, but always retained a small remnant of faithful people. With God's hand of protection removed, the northern nation was destroyed by the Assyrians, and the southern nation was destroyed by Babylon under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. However, God protected the remnant of Judah when Nebuchadnezzar took captives from Jerusalem. Among them was Daniel.

The conquest of this little nation of Judah came at the peak of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. True to Ezekiel's prophesy, the mighty Babylonian empire fell only thirty years after the destruction of Judah, about half-way through the period of the exile. The fifth chapter of Daniel describes how Belshazzar, a successor of Nebuchadnezzar, ordered the rich spoils from the Temple treasury in Jerusalem to be brought out and used in the worship of their pagan gods. During their revelry, he and his peers saw an image of a hand as it wrote on the wall of the palace. None of Belshazzar's advisors could explain the event, and knowing of Daniel's wisdom as demonstrated to Nebuchadnezzar, the king called upon Daniel. Daniel explained the sin that Belshazzar had committed and how the message prophesied the imminent destruction of the empire and the king's own death. Belshazzar rewarded Daniel by assigning to him a position of high authority in his kingdom, similar to that which he held under Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar died that very night, and the empire fell to the combined empire of the Persians and Medes. Darius was appointed by that empire to rule the region of Chaldea and Babylon, its primary city. Darius is the son of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), of the Medes.

Darius established the Persian form of administration whereby governors (Satraps) were assigned to administer the different regions.

**Daniel 6:2-3. *And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king***

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 8:5.

*should have no damage. <sup>3</sup>Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.*

## **1. UNCOMPROMISED INTEGRITY.**

Darius set three administrators between himself and the satraps. These three were responsible for the conduct of the satraps, assuring that they exacted the taxes and governed their regions according to the king's decrees. As Darius formed this government he took note of Daniel's extensive experience and reputation for integrity, and even though Daniel was one of the exiled Jews, Darius assigned to him the highest position of these three administrators. This resulted in Daniel's holding the second highest position in the kingdom, next to the king.

We might be reminded of the experience of Joseph in ancient Egypt, who like Daniel, demonstrated uncompromised integrity and a great wisdom that were the fruit of their faith in God. People who demonstrate integrity in their lives can be trusted by others. God can, and does, use people of integrity to accomplish His purposes. Joseph and Daniel are excellent examples of such people.

**Daniel 6:4-5.** *Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. <sup>5</sup>Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.*

The remaining two administrators did not agree with their king concerning the selection of Daniel as their chief, and certainly were quite dismayed by the prospect that this Hebrew Daniel would be given authority over the entire realm, one who did not share their world-view. When one demonstrates uncompromised integrity, the reaction of those around him can be dramatic. Most people have no such integrity, and so out of jealousy and hatred, despise those who do. When one of integrity is recognized by authority, they can become the object of denigration by those who do not hold to such demands for honesty and fidelity. However, Darius's sincere respect for Daniel is also quite evident. A man of pure integrity is hard to find, and such a man can be of great use to the king in the administration of his kingdom when so much of its politics is subject to corruption.

Daniel's integrity was also demonstrated in the other administrators' inability to discredit him. They had all of their pagan resources and the history of Daniel's life, and yet they could not find a occasion where Daniel had ever acted in an

illegal, immoral, inappropriate, or self-serving way. Their intent was to find a flaw in Daniel's integrity and take this information to the king and have Daniel removed from his position over them. Knowing of Daniel's integrity, the administrators realized that the only way they could create a conflict was to bring charges against him that were based upon differences between his practice of faith in God and Darius' secular law. This left the administrators with a dilemma. There was no law in the Persian-Mede form of government against the free expression of religious beliefs. Darius' government was both pagan and secular, having no official disdain for the faith of the Hebrews. This is why a Hebrew could rise to the second most powerful position in the kingdom.

**Daniel 6:6-9. *Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. <sup>7</sup>All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. <sup>8</sup>Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. <sup>9</sup>Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.***

The lack of integrity in the two administrators is evident by their conspiracy to depose Daniel. Because of their distribution around the kingdom, it is reasonable to speculate that not all 120 satraps were present to bring this decree to the king. They addressed the king with the common and respectful salutation, "live for ever," but their hatred for the king is quite evident. Their intent upon coming to the king is not to support him and his policies, but rather to disrupt his government by removing its most respected and skilled administrator.

Following their traditional salutation, they lied to the King. They clearly stated that this decree came from all of the administrators, yet Daniel was not a part of this consultation. Darius' quick agreement to the decree, and his later response to its consequences, illustrate that Darius signed the decree with no knowledge of its impact on Daniel, or of the conspiratory nature of the administrators' request.

We might think that Darius' agreement was unreasoned, but the decree actually made some sense when we consider ancient near-eastern culture. Darius was now the king over this new kingdom, and such a decree would clearly communicate that fact to the people. Darius was not setting himself up as a god, but merely as a temporary intercessor among the gods of the people. Such a claim was not uncommon for kings in relation to the pagan gods, for they considered their own appointments to be approved by such gods. Consequently, the people would not see this decree as unusual or autocratic. Furthermore,

such an act would serve to unify the people under this new king in what can only be considered a benevolent way. The 30-day authority of the decree would clearly communicate to the people that they were still free to worship their gods after the month passed. When we consider this context in their culture, we can see how Darius would agree to such a decree.

The words translated, "altereth not" represent a significant concept concerning ancient near-eastern codes of authority. Cultures of the middle and far-east held their kings in a position close to that of a god. Christians understand that God is timeless and unchangeable, and we stand confidently in the knowledge that God is fully faithful and dependable in His promises. This is part of the attribute of "immutability," the unchanging character that God demonstrates. Likewise, the people need to have confidence that their king will not be changing his policies from one day to the next. Consequently, the Medo-Persian empire adopted an accepted understanding that a decree from the king cannot be revoked, even by the king himself. As the "king" over the newly conquered region, Darius still answered to the Persian and Mede authority over him. If he were to demonstrate inconsistency in his reign, he could quickly lose it. Once the decree was signed, it could not be revoked.

***Daniel 6:10. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.***

How did Daniel respond to this decree? Even though Daniel holds a position close to the king, the king is still the king: it would be inappropriate for Daniel to approach the king unbidden, so he chooses not to. This left Daniel with a difficult choice. Daniel could not worship God with Darius as an intercessor, for no man has been given that task by God. God seeks a personal relationship with those who have faith in Him, and no such intercessor is necessary.

Up to this point in time, Daniel had developed his own, consistent, prayer life. He was present in his house three times each day, presumably in conjunction with meals, and faced a window that opened to the west, towards the now-destroyed city of Jerusalem. Daniel had confidence in his hope for the return of the Jews to Israel, a hope that was in agreement with Ezekiel's prophesy that the remnant would return from exile after a period of five generations, or 70 years. That time was quickly approaching. Also, Darius had none of the hatred of the Jews that was characteristic of the Babylonians, and would have little reason to keep the people in captivity any longer.

## **2, UNCOMPROMISED CONVICTION.**

Daniel's response to the decree is significant: he chose to change nothing. If he were to block his open window or move to another room to pray in private, if even for just these thirty days, he would avoid any conflict with the decree. This is the approach that many, if not most, Christians would take. This is just a small compromise that would help Daniel to fit into this pagan culture without conflict. We often see these little compromises as inconsequential. Our language may be peppered with "praise God" and "God is good" while we are surrounded by Christians on a Sunday morning, but the words do not pass our lips among the people we mix with during the week. Is this such a small compromise? Or, is it simply the first step in a process that shuts God out of our lives during the week, and nullifies our usefulness to the Kingdom? If this is the case, only satan wins in this scenario. Daniel saw any compromise of his faith as something to be avoided at all cost, and simply continued to worship God in the manner that he always had.

The scriptures do, repeatedly, counsel Christians to be obedient to the laws of the government that holds authority over them. Since governments are usually in place to serve the collective welfare of the people, it is rare for a real conflict to arise between governmental law and Christian moral beliefs, and when they do they are always the result of the influence of a few people who bring to government a godless agenda. Certainly, we will often experience a conflict of opinion, but it is rare that the law must be broken in order to be faithful to God. We see in the example of Daniel that when such a real conflict does exist, we cannot turn our backs on God. God's wisdom must be applied so that He is honored, and not used as a pawn in our agenda against an ungodly law.

**Daniel 6:11. *Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.***

The intent of the conspiracy is quite evident in the response of the other two administrators. It is clear that they knew of Daniel's unique practice of prayers by his open window, and as soon as the decree was published, they came to Daniel's home. It is also evident that they approached closely enough to overhear the content of his personal prayers as they verified that they were offered up directly to God and not through the king as was decreed.

Jesus told the disciples that, "a city on a hill cannot be hidden,"<sup>2</sup> as He referred to a life lived by faith as like a light that shines in the darkness. People, regardless of their own faith, will observe the life of a Christian. What they see will vary widely. They might see a person who curses and swears, and who lives a lifestyle of self-indulgence and pride. They might see a person who is even-tempered and kind, who seems to have a strength beyond themselves. They might see a person of integrity, whose honesty is apparent to all. When people

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:14.

look at you, what do they see? Will they find a Daniel, a person of uncompromised integrity? The administrators knew exactly what they would find when they went to Daniel's house because they knew of his faithfulness to God. They had been able to use this predictable behavior as a trap to ensnare Daniel. Is your faith so uncompromised that someone could use it against you? I once heard the question posed: "If faith in God were illegal, could you be convicted in a court of law based upon real evidence?" Certainly, Daniel could be so convicted.

**Daniel 6:12-14. *Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. <sup>13</sup>Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. <sup>14</sup>Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.***

The intent of the conspiracy is again emphasized in the quick return of the administrators to King Darius with their report of Daniel's disobedience of the decree. Their intent to dishonor their king and destroy Daniel was so great that they even set up the king with a series of logical arguments that would further make it impossible for Daniel to be spared. Without mentioning the purpose of their approach, they first reminded the king of the new decree and the consequences that would be brought upon anyone in the kingdom who did not honor it, and clarified that the decree could not be altered. Upon hearing the king's agreement, they declared that Daniel had broken the decree. It may be interesting to note that their statement "regardeth not thee" is a translation of the same phrase used against Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego when they were accused of an identical charge prior to their being cast into a blazing furnace.<sup>3</sup>

The king's response reveals much about his own integrity and wisdom. First, he was disappointed with himself for not considering the consequence that this decree would have on his most faithful servant, Daniel. He had believed the administrators when they said that all of them were in agreement, though Daniel was absent. He was wise enough to realize that he had been used by these unjust administrators in a conspiracy to kill Daniel. This posed a dilemma for the king from which he sought a solution. He could have overfed the lions before placing Daniel in the den, or put armor on him to protect him. However, any such

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel, Chapter 1.

an act would be a flagrant violation of the decree which he himself had set down. The king spent the entire day in an attempt to find a way to deliver Daniel from the decree, but could not find a solution that would honor the throne and the law upon which the people of the nation relied.

**Daniel 6:15-17. *Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. <sup>16</sup>Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. <sup>17</sup>And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.***

By using the king's own decree, the administrators again reminded the king of its voracity, and forced the king to obey it. Though the king did obey, it is evident that he handled the decree with wisdom and sincere concern for Daniel. He personally accompanied Daniel to the pit, evident by his speaking to Daniel once he had been lowered into the pit. Darius' words were significant. Experienced with the fruitless pursuit of the worship of pagan gods, Darius knew that the God of Daniel was real and alive. Darius did not say words of hope that Daniel would be delivered. Darius spoke of a confidence that such salvation was assured since Daniel had done no wrong. Perhaps Darius saw the similarity in this situation with that experienced by Daniel's friends who were cast into the furnace by Nebuchadnezzar.

**Daniel 6:18-19. *Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him. <sup>19</sup>Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.***

Darius' concern for the law was evident by his complete and well-documented execution of it as he placed Daniel in the den of lions. His concern for Daniel is also quite evident by the king's experience during Daniel's incarceration. Darius spent a sleepless night, worried for the life of Daniel. He spent his night fasting, and rejecting any form of entertainment or distraction. This may be seen as a pagan equivalent of fasting and prayer. Darius did not have faith in God, nor did this circumstance bring him to a point of faith. As soon as possible following the rising of the sun, Darius personally went to the den with the hope of finding Daniel alive.

**Daniel 6:20. *And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel,***

***servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?***

Darius immediately opened the den, and with a voice that was filled with grief and concern, spoke to Daniel. Darius did not shout, "Daniel, are you alive?" Darius knew that Daniel's only hope for survival was to have been miraculously saved by the God who Daniel had so faithfully served. Though Darius did not yet place any real personal faith in Daniel's God, he believed in the reality of Daniel's God and spoke of Him as "the Living God," an allusion to the possibility in his own mind that Daniel's God was indeed, real and living. There is no doubt that Darius sincerely hoped that this was true.

### **3. UNCOMPROMISED FAITH.**

**Daniel 6:21-23.** *Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. <sup>22</sup>My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. <sup>23</sup>Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.*

Much to the king's relief, Daniel responded. Despite the critical nature of Daniel's circumstance, Daniel remained true to his own character as he first demonstrated respect for the king and then proclaimed immediately that God had intervened on his behalf. He also told Darius the reason for his salvation: though he had been thrown into the den of lions for breaking the decree, Daniel had done nothing wrong either against God or against the king. With the decree faithfully executed, Darius had Daniel immediately removed from the den, and upon inspection of this man of about 83 years, found no injury of any kind. Like the three who were saved from the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel was likewise miraculously saved because of his uncompromised faith in God.

**Daniel 6:24.** *And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.*

Now, with the decree executed, Darius was free to deal with his unjust administrators who had despised him by their obvious conspiracy to kill Darius' most trusted administrator. Darius' response sounds harsh, but is typical for ancient kings. As the king, Darius has the authority to condemn one to death without the need for any judge or jury. Darius felt that an appropriate sentence

would be the same one that they imposed upon Daniel. Though the killing of their families may sound overly harsh or unjust, it was also an accepted practice, and there are several examples of similar judgments in scripture. The purpose for this judgment is to avoid any incident of revenge or political succession by the condemned prisoner's family.

Were the lion's hungry? Though the wording of the KJV is a little archaic, it is clear that the lions devoured all of those cast into the den before their bodies even reached its floor. The miracle of Daniel's salvation is further demonstrated by this event.

**Daniel 6:25-28. *Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. <sup>26</sup>I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. <sup>27</sup>He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. <sup>28</sup>So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.***

The news of Daniel's deliverance from the den of lions became known throughout the region when Darius published a decree that all within his dominion would recognize with reverence the living God of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar made a similar decree when Daniel's friends were saved from the furnace.

It is amazing to consider the positive impact that one single man has made for the kingdom of God through one simple contribution: uncompromised faith. When one maintains one's faith without compromise, the result is a godly life that is characterized by integrity, fidelity, conviction, and wisdom. Daniel was, and still is, respected by both those who loved God, and those who did not know Him. Kings held Daniel in high regard because of his trustworthiness and wisdom, granting to him positions of honor and responsibility. They found in Daniel a strength and courage that they could not understand, traits that we understand came from Daniel's confidence in God to protect and sustain him.

To children, the story of Daniel and the Lion's Den, is a cute and wonderful story. However, the message that comes out of this true event reaches deep to the heart as it illustrates an outstanding example of a man who is worthy of honor and respect: a man who loves God with all his heart, all his mind, and all his strength, expressing that love with a prayer-filled, full and confident dependence upon God. The result of his love for God is the fruit of integrity and fidelity that stands without compromise against the evil of this world. This is the form of

integrity that God desires from all who place their faith and trust in Him. Let us seek to develop such fidelity in the LORD.