

DANIEL - LESSONS ON HOW TO ABIDE IN CHRIST FROM AN OLD TESTAMENT SAINT

Studies in Daniel 1, 3, and 6 - Part five

Sunday, September 14th, 2014, 6:00 p.m. - Teaching #1749

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HABITS OF HOLINESS - TAKING THE TEETH OUT OF SATAN'S BITE

Daniel 6:1-28 - "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; [2] and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. [3] Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. [4] Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. [5] Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God." [6] Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! [7] All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. [8] Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." [9] Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction. [10] When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. [11] Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. [12] Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." [13] Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day." [14] Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. [15] Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed." [16] Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" [17] And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. [18] Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him. [19] Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. [20] As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

[21] Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! [22] My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." [23] Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. [24] And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces. [25] Then King Darius wrote to all the

peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: “Peace be multiplied to you. [26] I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. [27] He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.” [28] So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

Many years pass between the close of chapter three 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 is around eighty years old.

It's a mistake to think that spiritual battles are all faced in the early years of Christian experience. The Christian life has to be lived well over the years - not just in revivalistic spurts. Young people don't face all the temptations. It's an eighty year old Daniel who gets thrown to the lions for his faith and worship. ***And Daniel is as good an example in old age as he was in his youth.***

1) **THERE ARE TRIALS TAILORED FOR THE RIGHTEOUS**

Daniel 6:1-5 - “It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; [2] and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. [3] Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. [4] Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. [5] Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”

Isn't politics a beautiful thing? ***We are getting pretty accustomed to the digging up and slinging of dirt. Daniel has been in public service for around sixty-five years and his worst enemies can't find anything to use against him.*** There is nothing they can smudge his reputation with. Wouldn't you like to vote for someone like that?

But Daniel is going to suffer. Not because he's ***wicked***, but precisely because he's ***godly***. Daniel's life is a bill-board - a flashing neon sign to young and old alike. This world is organized against the godly. Not the religious, but those who honor God and follow His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus said that those who followed Him were to expect that there would be ***special problems*** they would all face ***because of their relationship to Him: John 16:33*** - “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Now, those words were born in a specific context. The tribulation Jesus talks about in that verse has absolutely nothing to do with sickness, or car accidents, or the high cost of living. Jesus makes very clear exactly what kind of tribulation He's thinking of:

John 15:17-21, 25 - “These things I command you, so that you will love one another. [18] “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. [19] If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. [20] 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 also keep yours. [21] But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me....[25] But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'"

In **verses 22 and 25** Jesus makes clear why they hated Him. He came and exposed their sin of rejecting Him. He specifically tied the life and salvation of God to the people's reception of Himself. **And the people already had religions.** And they already were considered moral, good people. So they hated Jesus telling them anything different.

As long as you only tell the world that God is love you won't be hated. And as long as you only tell the world that God loves them you won't be hated. But if that's all you're telling your neighbor, or you're boss, or the cab driver, or the people in your coffee group, **your not telling them all that Jesus would tell them.** He told good, decent people that their unbelief - their rejection of Him as God's divine Son and Savior, was the greatest sin of all.

And Jesus said there would be persecution for the faithful followers and witnesses for Him who came with that same message.

2) **THERE WILL ALWAYS COME A POINT WHERE CONFLICTING KINGDOMS MUST COLLIDE - THAT POINT ALONE DETERMINES OUR LOYALTY**

Remember, the only reason Darius cares at all about Daniel is the fact that Daniel has served so wisely and faithfully for close to seventy years. Daniel didn't get up every day just determined to make life miserable for the king. At the points where his service didn't conflict with his obedience to and worship of God, he honored the king.

But inevitably, over the years, there arose times when the absolutes of each kingdom collided. Our text indicates such a time: **Daniel 6:7-10** - "All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. [8] Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." [9] Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction. [10] When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously."

Notice that phrase in **verse 8** - "The law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot not be revoked." This is the absolute of the Medes and the Persians. It's the way they do things. It's a part of life that never bends or changes. And those who try to do otherwise will pay dearly.

And, in beautiful simplicity, just as he did as a teenager, Daniel draws his own line. God bless Daniel. "When he knew the document had been signed..." **It's what you do when you know what it costs that measures the size of your soul.**

Do you just fly your flag when the band is playing and the people are praising and the blessing is flowing? What about when the world backs you to the wall and you're all alone? What about when it costs that contract to honor the Lord? What about when you face the laughs and taunts, and possible loss of dear friends? What about when your boy friend or girl friend wants to lead you away from pure commitment to Jesus?

Let's look at the specific pressure brought to bear on Daniel:

3) **THE PRESSURE TO REFRAIN FROM THE OPEN, REGULAR DEVOTION TO AND WORSHIP OF GOD**

The trap is set in **verse 7** - "All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions."

Daniel's response is briefly summed up in **verse 10** - "When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously."

Here's my question. **Why in the world would Daniel not modify his practice of prayer?** The decree wasn't forbidding **private prayer in the heart**. Nobody could have detected that. The decree was only for 30 days. Daniel could pray all he wanted after that. And don't forget, Daniel had been reading the prophet Jeremiah. He knew that the time of captivity was coming to a close. Soon he would be back in Jerusalem. Why in the world would he mess everything up now?

Add to that another fact. The decree wasn't **commanding** idolatry. This wasn't like the command in chapter three to have everybody bow and kneel at the same time before the statue made by Nebuchadnezzar. Read **verse 12** carefully:

Daniel 6:12 - "Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked."

The important words in that verse are the words, "**except to you, O king...**" The people didn't have to worship the king. But they couldn't worship anything **other than** the king. There was no command to worship idols. This wasn't a command to **do something forbidden by God**.

So again, why does Daniel refuse to budge in the practice of his **habits of holiness**?

- a) **Compromise doesn't begin with sinful disobedience but with spiritual neglect.** Strength for resisting temptation and compromise doesn't just fall from the sky at the point of temptation. It's stored up in the heart long before the trial comes by hours on the knees.

Look again at **verse 10** - "When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, **as he had done previously.**"

"**As he had been doing previously.**" Daniel didn't **start** praying when the trial came. He **continued** praying when the trial came. In other words, his seeking of God wasn't a **response** to the trial. It was a way of life that **entered into** the trial.

One of the battles pastors face is the constant struggle to make people see the connection between events that they don't normally see as being connected at all. Every time you make the effort to pray and have devotions with your family you aren't just having devotions. **You're getting them ready for a bigger test somewhere down the road.** Every time you make the effort and get everybody out of bed Sunday morning and get them to church or for Christian Education, you aren't just going to church. **You're building protection for a much bigger battle still in the future.**

These are just a few examples. Be diligent. Take the long view. Remember the future comes racing at you with blinding speed. You can't face it all at the last minute. Nor can your loved ones. Daniel was strong in the lion's den because he established that strength long before.

- b) ***Daniel refused to abandon his habit of prayer and worship because that's how he reminded himself of God's faithfulness and power.***

Think about this a bit. Why pray on the roof, with the windows open, and especially, ***facing Jerusalem?*** Why this little routine? And why does it never change?

Daniel isn't just setting up some blind, narrow, legalistic routine. There's great wisdom at work here. Daniel has been in this foreign land for almost all of his earthly life. He has experienced great success and power and wealth. He works in this foreign kingdom. He's paid in the currency of this foreign kingdom. His whole life has been trained and educated in the ways of this foreign kingdom.

Three times a day he stops what he's doing. He kneels down and points his whole being (mind, heart and even his body) toward another place - Jerusalem. And three times a day he tells himself and his neighbors and his God that he refuses to allow himself to be diverted or distracted from this ultimate goal.

Three times a day he tells himself he's a stranger in this foreign land. Three times a day he tells himself God has promised to take him somewhere else. His future isn't where he kneels. Three times a day he kneels and bows down to remind himself of who the real God is. ***No wonder he won't bow to anyone else!***

- c) ***Daniel refused to abandon his practice of prayer and worship because that's what kept his heart thankful to His God.***

Daniel 6:10 - "When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and **gave thanks before his God,** as he had done previously."

Did Daniel kneel and pray because he was thankful, or was he thankful because he knelt in prayer three times every day? Remember, Daniel has been a captive - a prisoner - for seventy years. He's been longing for and praying for the deliverance of God's people - for seventy years. It's easy to get discouraged against those odds.

I know people who have been waiting for God to do something for three years, or twelve months, or nine weeks. I've seen people give up while God seemed silent. I've seen people quit church because what good did it do anyway? I've seen people, while never actually ***blaming God***, who have inwardly grown cold and numb to things spiritual.

How did Daniel avoid those disasters? What kept him so strong in faith? ***Three times a day, three times every day, he stopped what he was doing, knelt down and thanked God for every good thing he could think of.*** O, he had his requests. But he knew that they probably weren't as important in the long run as his expressions of praise and thanksgiving. Seventy years a captive, and he's still praising God. That's what times of thanksgiving will do for your soul. Remember that during the worship service!

- d) ***Daniel refused to abandon his times of prayer and worship because he was as concerned about witness as he was about purity.***

Daniel could have avoided the lion's den. He could have prayed quietly in the kitchen

instead of on the roof top. But the fact that people saw Daniel pray means they would have seen Daniel **stop praying**. And all those people would have concluded that ***Daniel's God was not more precious than Daniel's life.***

But God is more precious than life - any life. And all of our actions are to bear testimony to that fact. God is **to be seen** as being more precious than my time, my money, my possessions, my grandparents, my house, my investments, my business, my education, my friendships, my car, my schedule, my health, and my whole life.

That's what Jesus meant when he said **"Let your light *shine before men* in such a way *that they may see your good works*, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"** (Matthew 5:16).

Don't live your life - not any of it - for your own ends. Make sure every thing you do - every choice you make - ends up in God being praised and prized by all who see you. Every action of your life should spotlight how wonderful and valuable and treasured God is by you.

Does it work like that? Can the actions of one faithful person make that kind of difference? Look at what happened in our text just because Daniel would not give up on his devotional time:

Daniel 6:25-28 - "Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. [26] I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. [27] He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions." [28] **So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.**"