



Daniel 6:1-28

1 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.”

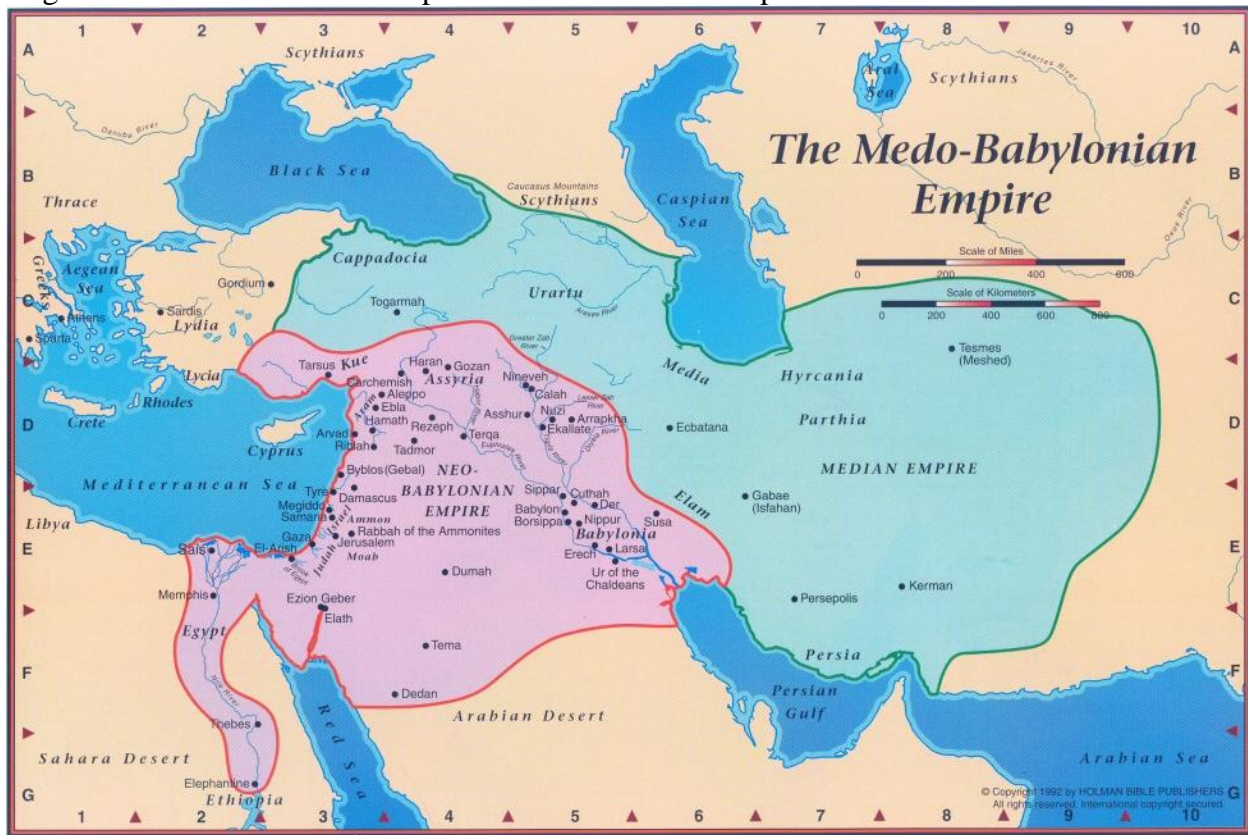
28 So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

There are many ways to die and although all have the same result, some are undeniably worse than others. And you should know by now that we don’t have to look any further than the book of Daniel to see a lot of horrible ways to die. In chapters 1-3 we have a possible beheading, being torn limb from limb—twice!—and a burning, fiery furnace. Amazingly, there were no deaths or even death threats in chapters four and five but now we come upon the most famous form of capital punishment in the book—the den of lions.

Ch	Transgression	Punishment
1	I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see	So you would endanger my head with the king.”

	that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age?	
2	if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation,	you shall be torn limb from limb , and your houses shall be laid in ruins.
3	whoever does not fall down and worship	shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace .
3	Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego	shall be torn limb from limb , and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.

It is this den of lions which has made the chapter famous but it is certainly not the most important part. The Biblical writers are master story tellers and this story is weaved together beginning with key details. Remember that Daniel was brought as a captive to Babylon in the first year of the Babylonian kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar and quickly rose to a position of influence. Almost seventy years later and a brand new kingdom, we again see him quickly rise to a position of influence under king Darius and the new kingdom of the Medes and Persians. Darius appointed 120 satraps who were essentially mayor or governors of their smaller region. There were three high officials who were to rule over the 120 satraps and Daniel distinguished himself even above these. Darius planned to “set him over the whole kingdom.” No one in the kingdom would have been more powerful than Daniel except Darius.



But there are two things that power is almost certain to produce—corruption and jealousy. Jealousy seems to be the driving force in the whole story as Daniel’s enemies hatched a plan to bring him down. They vetted the candidate assuming they would find some evidence of

corruption or negligence. They may have even hired the ancient equivalent of a private detective to dig up dirt on old Daniel...*but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.* I like how the NASB reads here. “no ground of accusation or *evidence of corruption*, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was *to be* found in him.”

Tell me—what do politicians do when they can’t find enough dirt on an opposing candidate? They make up lies and create false accusations. We are at the height of an incredibly important election season and we are seeing this happen every day. But Daniel’s character was such that they did not even try to invent a case against him, possibly realizing that NO ONE would have believed their lies. Now this is what the Bible means when it says we are to be above reproach. Can you imagine having a team of people follow you around for a month or two trying to find even a whiff of corruption, deceit or falsehood? I am not suggesting that Daniel was sinless and if he were here, I think he would be the first to admit it, but we do have one of the greatest examples of godly character in all of Scripture.

The first principle illustrated by Daniel’s life is the principle that “character trumps giftedness”. Our society and even Christians and churches put such a low priority on character because we are drawn toward giftedness. Giftedness is more easily seen from the outside. Giftedness is much more visible than character because character is an internal attribute. Character, of course, can be seen, but it takes more time and effort to do so. In general, giftedness is what attracts other people. This is why megachurches have grown at exponential rates. Here is a chart showing 35 years of growth.

1970: 10
1980: 50
1990: 500
2005: 1500

[This chart](#) shows that the average salary for senior pastors in these churches is \$147,000. These churches are growing so fast and so large that someone invented a new category of church—the gigachurch. A megachurch has at least 2000 in attendance and a gigachurch has at least ten thousand in attendance. Some of these churches are great and some are downright awful but the point is that people are attracted to them because they are big and have lots of programs and everything is done professionally and top notch. People are attracted to the quality and giftedness of staff and volunteers. But you almost never see tens of thousands of people gathered around someone with a stellar character. A Godly character does not attract hordes of people. In real life, giftedness almost always trumps character but Biblically, character always trumps giftedness.

Tomorrow I will be sitting on an ordination council to evaluate three pastors in our Wisconsin district. They have to write a 20 or 35 page paper on our doctrinal statement and then give an oral defense. In their papers they have to include a discussion on spiritual gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit and I always ask the same question of every candidate. Which is more important—spiritual gifts or fruits of the Spirit? Spiritual gifts are marvelous things and every believer ought to be continually expressing and developing in their spiritual gifts for the edification and unity of the body. But if you’ve read I Corinthians or been in a local church for any length of time you

know that spiritual gifts cause all kinds of problems and disunity. People get prideful about the own gifts jealous of other's gifts, angry because others are serving enough. But when was the last time kindness or gentleness caused a church conflict? When did you ever see too much love, joy and peace ever split a church? Character always trumps giftedness.

You also see this when it comes to selecting elders for a local church. If you read through the list of qualifications of an elder in Timothy and Titus, only one is related to giftedness and all of the rest are related to character. I would take a guy with solid character over an extremely gifted man every time. If Daniel had been extremely gifted but did not possess a Godly character, his enemies would have been able to have dug up some dirt on him. But they couldn't touch him. Daniel was very gifted but his character was truly above reproach.

So Daniel's enemies hatched this master plan. When you really think about it, the plan, though evil through and through, was quite brilliant. His enemies took advantage of three things to get their way and all three had to come together perfectly in order for their plan to work.

1. The irrevocable nature of the laws of the Medes and Persians. For such a powerful kingdom, this has to be one of the dumbest laws in the history of the world. If you pass a law, it is irrevocable. Good laws should be hard to change, such as the process our nation uses for amending the Constitution, but an irrevocable law must have been thought up during one of those massive drunken feasts the kings were so fond of throwing.
2. The great pride of King Darius. As the story makes very clear, Darius thought very highly of Daniel but he thought even more highly of himself. "Hey king, we have this great idea. Why don't you pass a law that says *whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.*"
3. The great humility of Daniel. Daniel was humble and faithful and therefore untouchable, which is the very reason this evil plan worked so well.

Each part of the plan was a vital cog in their engine of malice.

Daniel's difficulties reminded me of the challenging work situation that Jim Bosien is facing. Jim has three peers who theoretically should be sharing 12 midnight shifts per month, about 3 shifts per person per month, but since Jim does a good job at work and is less likely to complain about working these shifts, he was given nine shifts a month and the other 3 were given one per month. So Jim is being punished for being an excellent employee. But that not the end of it. There is one guy who does nothing at work, and when him told this story to me he emphasized it said, "and I mean he does absolutely nothing." Instead of firing or disciplining this guy, they decided to remove all of his responsibilities and begin adding them back to him one by one. So it is clear that his superiors are both rewarding laziness and punishing hard work. Please understand that Jim was not complaining to me because I was the one who asked him about his work. Then I asked Jim how he planned to deal with this inequity in the workplace and he told me that he just plans keep doing what he is supposed to do.

Jim's story matches Daniel's in that both are examples of good character but they are similar in another important way as well. Unlike his friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were asked to commit a positive sin, Daniel was asked to omit a positive duty. Daniel refused to stop doing the right thing despite the consequences and in the same way, Jim is refusing to stop doing

the right thing. We do talk a lot about sins of commission, sinful acts that we commit but Scripture has plenty of examples of sins of omission—good things that we should be doing but are not.

Daniel refused to stop praying three times a day next to his open window facing his former hometown of Jerusalem. Daniel prayed in the spirit of Psalm 55:17—*Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice.* I am guessing that he also prayed something similar to what Paul wrote in Philippians 1:21—For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. After all, but this time he was in his early 80's and had lived a long life of service to the Lord.

But the point is that he did pray. But it raises an interesting ethical dilemma. Why did Daniel have to pray in such a public manner, in front of his window where he knew that his enemies would see him. After all, isn't prayer a personal endeavor which is generally done in private and in the quiet of our own mind? Couldn't Daniel have kept praying silently and thereby not have gotten caught? Wouldn't that have fulfilled his obedience to the Lord but also satisfy his enemies?

It seems like a solution that you and I might have chosen, but for Daniel, it would have shown his enemies that they had won and that Daniel was afraid of the new law. Since this was the way that Daniel had always prayed in the past, his absence in front of his window three times per day would have been interpreted by his enemies as not praying at all. Daniel knew exactly what he was doing. He knew that Darius's law was no match for God's saving power. If you recall, this was the purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation: *to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.* (Daniel 4:17). Furthermore, Daniel knew this when he was still a young lad when he prayed this prayer in chapter two. *"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; (2:20-21)*

You see, Daniel did not just have some generic trust in God. He trusted in the reliability and faithfulness of God's character. Darius didn't have power in and of himself. Daniel knew that the king's power was nothing more than a derivative of God's power. The king's power was a gift from God and he could revoke that gift at any moment. Our second principle is that Daniel had strong faith but his faith had an object—God's faithfulness. If you want a stronger faith you need to get a stronger God because the size of your faith is exactly the same size as your God. Daniel had tested the Lord and found him utterly faithful for over eighty years. Hebrews 11:33 says—*who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.*

The third principle is the discipline of prayer. I think we get into this mindset that says that good habits like prayer and Bible reading ought to be exciting and full of warm fuzzies and goose bumps because if God were in these things, this is the way we should feel. We need to get past the warm fuzzies and understand that these habits are what build a strong foundation for the storms of life. Why do you think Daniel had such immense trust in the Lord? Could it be, in part, because he had this discipline of prayer? No matter what else came his way, Daniel was guaranteed to meet with the Lord at least three times each and every day. Now he may have had

something like goosebumps when he heard the king’s edict and went straight to his room to pray but I guarantee you that he did not have daily goosebumps in prayer. It’s OK to work hard at prayer, for it to be a true discipline.

Our fourth principle is that Daniel had a personal and powerful witness. Daniel clearly made enemies but he also made a good friend in Darius who was sickened when he realized his own pride had sentenced Daniel to death. But even then, he was hopeful. He said to Daniel, “*May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!*” (16) Darius knew about Daniel’s God and Daniel’s trust in his God. It is likely that Daniel had told the king of his powerful God and miracles from Israel’s past, including God’s miracles in Babylon, the hand writing on the wall, the vision of the fall of Babylon to the Medo-Persian kingdom. So the fact that Darius held out any hope whatsoever is testimony to Daniel’s impact on the king. Darius knew that it was within the realm of possibility. Darius held out some hope, why else would he run to the lion’s den? *O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?*

After the king dealt with the conspirators, he sent an edict to all surrounding nations, which sounded very much like the one Nebuchadnezzar sent. Look at the remarkable similarities.

Nebuchadnezzar—chapter 4	Darius—chapter 6
<i>to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth:</i>	<i>to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth</i>
<i>Peace be multiplied to you!</i>	<i>Peace be multiplied to you.</i>
<i>His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.</i>	<i>for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.</i>
<i>How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders!</i>	<i>He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth,</i>
<i>It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.</i>	
<i>I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever</i>	

There are two distinct differences between what Darius and Nebuchadnezzar wrote. First, Nebuchadnezzar personalized the Lord’s mighty works by saying that the Lord had done “for me.” Second, he was actually praising the Lord and not just stating facts about him. There is no question that Darius had a healthy fear of the Lord. It took Nebuchadnezzar about thirty years to surrender his will to the Lord but in a few short months Darius was already well on his way to doing so.

All four of these principles are inseparable from one another. You can’t have a positive witness if you don’t have good character. You are not likely to have a positive witness if you have no discipline in your prayer life. If I could use one word for Daniel’s life it would be integrity. Integrity means to be a whole person, that you are the same person at church as you are throughout the rest of the week.

This morning I got a call here at church at 7:30 am. It was from an old family friend who was already enduring some serious and difficult trials. Her and her husband received a frantic call from their son last night informing them that his wife had just left and took their toddler son with her. This is something that she had been planning for some time as all of the bank accounts and credit cards had been transferred to her name. She called the police while he was away and the police found him at the Laundromat, informed him that his wife and some were leaving and that he needed to stay away and not interfere. Obviously, this woman is not a whole person. In private she is a different person than she has been to her husband and his family.

As you walk out the doors this morning I want to leave you with this question. Are you a whole person, and if not, what do you plan to do about it?

Rich Maurer
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