



“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”
(Daniel 6:5).

Power and Purity

L567. Date: July 1980. **Text:** Daniel 6:1-11.

Topic: Righteousness: Of Believers.

Central Truth: Power with God requires devotion to God.

Today, we begin a study of one of the best-known stories in the Bible: Daniel in the lion's den. It is woven around the jealousy of his associates, the vanity of his king, the sentence of death upon him, and the miraculous deliverance provided of God. The story is well known and loved by children and adults.

The event's recorded in Daniel chapter 6 occurred about two years after the fall of the Babylonian empire and the death of Belshazzar (chapter 5). The new Medo-Persian empire was established and jealousies had risen among its officials. Daniel was about eighty-three at that time.

There has been much discussion as to the identity of Darius the Mede who appears as king in Daniel 6. History has no other reference to him. Some think he was Cyrus under a different name; others that he was Cambyses the son of Cyrus who followed him to the throne; yet others that he was Gubaru who had been appointed governor over Babylon by Cyrus. It is also possible the term *Darius* was not a proper name but an honorific title, meaning “holder of the scepter.” There is no way to be sure at the present point of information. It is enough that the Darius, whoever he was, exercised the powers of a king even to life and death over his officers.

Remember that historical sections of the Bible are more than mere history. They were written for spiritual reasons. Therefore, let us review Daniel 6:1-11 looking for spiritual principles which are applicable today.

I. A GOOD MAN MAY BE HATED BY EVIL MEN (6:1-4)

Jesus himself said, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: for because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”* (John 15:18,19). Evil hates good because it appears the more evil in the presence of good.

Darius was a genius at administration. He needed a careful supervision of the kingdom until the new dynasty was firmly settled. Therefore, he set 120 princes (called “satraps” or “protectors of the kingdom”) over the land. In turn, he set three “presidents” (meaning “chiefs”) over the 120 princes. That way, he had three men reporting directly to him instead of 120 men reporting to him.

Daniel was not only one of the presidents; he was to be chief among them. He was distinguishing himself as superior to the other two presidents, so the king planned to place him in a position of second in the kingdom.

Jealousy stirred the other two presidents. They expressed their evil feelings by plotting against Daniel. For a period of time, they watched every detail of his work as an officer of the king. They watched to see if he worked faithfully, was honest in his affairs, and was fully loyal to the king. They found not the slightest basis on which to accuse him before the king. They hated him the more.

Goodness in a man does not gain respect by wicked men. They hate goodness because it is not in them.

II. A GOOD MAN'S VIRTUE MAY BE USED AGAINST HIM (6:5-9)

The enemies of Daniel concluded that his life was so honorable there was but one way to trap him. They must use his devotion to his God as a basis of accusation. But how?

They had noticed that Daniel was faithful to pray to his God. Three times each day (perhaps at morning, noon, and evening) he would open his windows toward Jerusalem and pray to his God. That was a way they could trap him.

The two presidents and the satraps they could influence came before King Darius with a lie. They said, “ALL the presidents of the kingdom . . . have taken, counsel together that the king should establish a statute and set forth a binding decree that anyone who makes a request of any god or man

for thirty days, except from you, O King, shall be cast into the den or lions.” All the presidents had not agreed to that; Daniel had not.

The proposal seemed right to the king. That would be a way to assure him of the allegiance of his officers and his people. (Remember how Nebuchadnezzar sought to secure such allegiance with his image of gold, chapter 31) He made the decree, had it written, and signed it.

The enemies thought they had triumphed. They had confidence that Daniel was so committed to his God that he would not cease to pray to Him. Surely Daniel would convict himself as a traitor to the king by disobeying his command.

Religious history reports many instances when enemies of the faith have used the very dedication of a people against them. What a fiendish and demonic plot!

III. A GOOD MAN MUST NOT PERMIT EVIL TO TURN HIM FROM GOD (6:10, 11)

The decree of King Darius was proclaimed publicly. Daniel heard it, as did all the other officers and citizens. What would the man of God do?

Consider the alternatives open to Daniel. (1) He could continue to pray in public three times a day as before. (2) He could cease to pray for thirty days, and so thwart the evil scheme of his enemies. (3) He could pray somewhere in secret, where he could not be seen, and his enemies would perhaps think that he had ceased to pray in obedience to the king. Each alternative had its problem. The first would put his life in danger, for a decree of the king could not be changed under any circumstance after it had been issued. The second would be an outright denial of his God and an indication that God was not able to handle such problems and it was not worth one's taking the risk. The third would be to become a hypocrite and deny his God in public while continuing devotion in private. None of the alternatives was pleasant.

What did Daniel do? He opened his windows toward the west, the direction of Jerusalem, and continued to pray three times a day as he had before. There was no particular spiritual merit to looking toward Jerusalem to pray. Solomon had suggested it in his prayer of dedication of the temple (I Kings 8:33, 35, 38, 44, 48) and it became the custom of the Jews. To pray looking toward Jerusalem was a sign the heart was desiring to meet God there.

Daniel left nothing out of his prayer life because of the opposition of his enemies. He kept on bowing, praying, and praising God. He kept on

praying three times a day, not changing his normal routine in religious exercises.

A new element entered Daniel's prayer when he became aware of the decree of the king and the danger to his person. Verse 11 reports the opponents of the prophet came and found him *“praying and making supplication before his God.”* To “make supplication” means to “implore favor.” Daniel kept on praying, only adding the petition that God would give him grace in that hour of trial.

Men and women of God still experience pressure like that which came upon Daniel. Peer pressure is strong. Daniel could have escaped his problem if he had been “one of the boys” and cultivated the lifestyle and support of unbelievers who held offices in government. He was opposed because he was different, not one of them. Christians who do not attend some of the “office parties” or cater to the whims of their superiors might find themselves opposed and accused just as Daniel did.

The admonition of Holy Scripture is that the Christian *“be not conformed to this world”* (Romans 12:2). He must not permit the pressure of the world to design him to its pattern. It is because he is different that he can be identified as a child of God and shine as a light in a wicked generation.

Consider the devotional scripture which accompanies today's study. *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's”* (I Corinthians 6:19, 20).

Let Christians learn and live by this principle: Commitment must not change with circumstances.

1. What do you know about Darius?
2. What does John 15:18, 19 teach you?
3. Why do evil men hate good men?
4. How have you seen that truth in your own life?
5. What help is given in I Peter 2:12 and 3:16?
6. Which of Daniel's alternatives would you have chosen?
7. Why does prayer change when trouble comes?
8. How do you experience pressure like Daniel did?
9. What help does I Corinthians 6:19, 20 give?
10. How can you share this lesson with someone this week?