

Mid Week • Daniel 6

INTRODUCTION

In the fourth round of a national spelling contest in Washington, 11 year old Rosalie Elliot from South Carolina was asked to spell *avowal*.
In her soft Southern accent she spelled it.
But did the seventh grader use an “a” or an “e” as the next to last letter?
The judges couldn't decide.
For several minutes they listened to tape playbacks, but the critical letter was accent-blurred.
Chief Judge John Lloyd finally put the question to the only person who knew the answer, little Rosalie.
Surrounded by whispering young spellers, she now knew the correct spelling of the word.
Without hesitating, she replied she had misspelled it.
She walked from the stage.
The entire audience stood and applauded, including half a hundred newspaper reporters.
Rosalie rated a hand and it must have been a proud moment for her parents.
The thing that ought to make us wonder, however, was the feeling on the part of so many that the issue of Rosalie’s honesty might have been in doubt in the first place.
It seems that we have stopped taking integrity for granted and when we see it, are surprised.
How very sad!

In Daniel 6, we are confronted with an example of integrity that stands in stark contrast to so much that we see around us today.

DANIEL 6

¹It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; ²and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. ³Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.

A little setting of the scene is in order.

This Darius is the same man we talked about at the end of last week’s study.

His Persian name was Gubaru, a political official who had been with the Persian king Cyrus when he invaded Babylon.

Once martial law had restored peace to the newly captured province of Babylon, Gubaru was installed as the Persian ruler of the province.

In Daniel we encounter him by his Aramaic name – Darius.

Showing himself to be an astute political leader and administrator, Darius set about to *organize* and order the area Cyrus had appointed him to govern.

He established 120 satraps – regional commissioners.

These 120 reported to 3 governors, of which Daniel was one.

When Persia captured Babylon, the entire Babylonian empire fell by default to Persian control.

It would have been difficult in the extreme for the Persians to try to manually reconstruct the governmental and political administration of this vast area. So they merely absorbed what was already in place.

Remember – what is the one thing the Persians would have been looking for out of their new lands?

Loyalty – as expressed in what? Taxes!

Notice the words in v. 2 – so that the king would suffer no loss.

So – in order to ensure the steady supply of revenues to the Persian court, and pay for the war of conquest they've just waged, what do they want to make sure stays in place and flowing smoothly? The taxation system!

What better structure to accomplish that than the Babylonian one already in place?

And what better people to oversee it than people who already had intimate knowledge of the Babylonian system? Guys like Daniel!

But at this point, Daniel is in his mid-80's.

And as we saw last week, recently he's been in retirement.

But his fame as a wise man is brought to the attention of the new ruler and his exploits as a dream and vision interpreter commend him to Darius who assigns him the task of being one of these 3 governors.

As Daniel went about his task of overseeing his assignment of satraps, it became clear he had a much better grasp of things and far greater skill in administration.

Darius observed this and began to comment on it to others.

Soon the king was thinking of ways to promote Daniel – making him #2 in the kingdom under himself.

But at this point, there are 3 #2's and, and the other two don't relish the idea of being stuck under one of their peers.

These may have been guys who had already been shown up by Daniel in previous engagements with him before Nebuchadnezzar, and see the naïveté of Darius as to the history as a plus they can use to their advantage.

⁴So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. ⁵Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God."

For reasons of pure pride and jealousy, these guys conspire to discredit Daniel.

They are ambitious and see Daniel as standing in the way of their promotion.

This is political scheming at it's most obvious.

History is filled with stories of the conniving and conspiracies planned and hatched in the name of politics and power.

If you and I could see behind the scenes and into the smoke-filled rooms of the

political hacks and power-brokers who scheme to install people in office who will do their bidding, we would be stunned to hear the ideas they come up with, the plans they make, the way they use every tool at their disposal to defame, discredit, and villainize their opponents.

What we read about here is just one of a long list of back-room political plots to dispense with an opponent.

But note *their conclusions* about Daniel's character – He's **blameless!**

Why would they seek to defeat a good man?

Because for them, it isn't about being good or right – it isn't about doing the right thing – it's about being in power, about winning the prize.

They don't see their office as a position of service, it's a trophy – a proof and vindication they're the better person.

Daniel saw public office as a place to serve – and because he was a faithful man – he served.

They saw public office as a means to serve their own selfish agenda of self-promotion.

Consequently, they were willing to do anything to get the position.

Oh that there were people running for office today who saw the office as a place to *serve*, rather than *be served*.

Oh for *servants* instead of *politicians!*

For men and women of principle instead of prejudice.

For people who place justice and what is right and good above what is popular or politically expedient.

I would sooner vote for a man or woman who answers the questions with a simple yes or no, than with a 5 minute reason for this or that and leaves me wondering where they really stand.

Prove to me you are a person of steadfast, uncompromising principles.

Show me you don't care what the polls say.

Show me a proven track record of integrity, that you are the kind of person who keeps your promises – in your marriage, in your business.

I want to trust you – Prove you are worthy of my trust.

Because I have become used to politicians who I know are telling me only what I want to hear, and then as soon as they have my vote, they use their office for their own ends, to give themselves some kind of glorious legacy for the history books.

They make promises they know they can't keep but sound good.

They tell lies and break promises – even to their wife and friends.

How am I supposed to believe they will keep their promise to me whom they've never met?

Where are the Daniels?

Where are the men and women whose past and present contain no ugly secret?

In a cartoon some years ago, John Tower was on the witness stand for his confirmation hearing and he was asked: "What would you do if we rejected your nomination on the grounds that you're a boozing womanizer?"

His reply: "Move to Massachusetts and run for the U.S. Senate."
His answer is humorous because of the jab at truth it takes.
What a sad commentary on the state of politics.

Josiah Gilbert Holland wrote these stirring words . . .

God, give us men! A time like this demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands;
Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honor; men who will not lie;
Men who can stand before a demagogue
And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking!
Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog
In public duty and in private thinking;
For while the rabble, with their thumb-worn creeds,
Their large professions and their little deeds,
Mingle in selfish strife, lo! Freedom weeps,
Wrong rules the land and waiting Justice sleeps.

Daniel was just such a man – and the walking shadows of men of his day found their emptiness irradiated by his life and example and conspired to extinguish his light so that it might no longer reveal the shabbiness of their own.

Realizing there was no scandal they could lay at his door, no corruption, no graft, no extortion, no mismanagement with which they could go to Darius and have him removed, they decided to pit his devotion to God against his position in office.

They knew from Daniel's life and witness that when push came to shove,
Daniel would always choose loyalty to God over loyalty to man.
They then plotted to pit the two against each other.

⁶So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! ⁷All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." ⁹Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

First of all, they lied!

Not ALL the governors and satraps, administrators and advisors consulted together and agreed on this.

For one – Daniel was a governor, and *he* wasn't a part of this.

And there would have been numerous satraps under Daniel who would have held great loyalty to him *because* of his integrity.

The governors and few satraps who *were* a part of this conspiracy made it

appear that this regulation was something that would *assist* them in the administration of the kingdom – kind of like a *loyalty oath* that would unite the kingdom under Darius' rule.

Like Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, it was a way to see where incipient rebellions may be brewing and would allow them to root out trouble-makers.

At least, that's the way they present it to Darius.

But from the beginning we know they have only one victim in mind – Daniel.

Their proposal was this: Pass a 30-day ordinance that no one may petition or pray to anyone but the King.

Why would Darius go along with this proposal?

Simple – It appealed to his pride.

This regulation elevated him to the position of a god!

For only 30 days – but hey! – that's better than nothing.

These men, motivated as they were by *pride*, knew how to use pride to trip others.

Darius fell for it, hook, line, and sinker.

So he signed the decree into law.

And notice that this law was *irrevocable*, as it says in v. 8, according to the law of the Medes & Persians.

Under the Babylonian system, the king was *over* the law, he was totally sovereign!

Under the Persian system, the king was *under* the law and once he put his signature to something, even *he* was bound by it.

You know, what we see here in Daniel 6 is a revelation of something that has been re-enacted again and again in history.

It is the *deification* of the *State* – the tendency to exalt the government to the place of worship.

No one was allowed to pray to anyone but the king – the State was put in the place of God.

The biggest battle the Christians of the early church faced was conflict with the Roman Empire over the issue of *Caesar worship*.

As a test of loyalty to the Romans, they commanded that people ascend a platform erected in some public place, offer a pinch of incense to Caesar while saying the formula, "Caesar is Lord."

As they walked off the platform they would be handed a small scroll that bore witness to their oath of loyalty to Caesar, who as the representative of Roman government was also considered a *deity*, and the embodiment of the Spirit of the Empire.

Christians and Jews *could not* and *would not* participate in this worship of Caesar.

And while the Jews were given an official exemption from having to do it, Christians were given no exemption.

The result was that millions were arrested as insurgents and revolutionaries,

sold into slavery, or used as fodder for the games.

Today in many countries, like China, Christians who refuse to worship the State as God are harassed, tortured, and executed.

And as we see in prophecy concerning the end times, the day will come when what we read about here in Daniel 6 and in the stories of the Early Church, will be restored in a way never seen before when the Antichrist and false prophet require everyone to receive a mark without which they can neither buy nor sell.

This will be the ultimate loyalty oath – showing allegiance to the antichrist and acceptance of Him as god.

All those who refuse the mark for the sake of Christ will be put to death.

What will Daniel do when he discovers the order of Darius?

Will he comply – or continue his habit of prayer to Yahweh?

¹⁰Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

This is simply *heroic* – this is the kind of thing a hero does!

Heroism is not an absence of fear – it's pressing on to do what's right in the *face of fear*.

Daniel knew of the ordinance.

He knew what the consequences of his actions would be, but he pressed ahead and did them anyway.

And it seems that he did so in a way that he knew would communicate to those who were against him that their machinations were not going to knock him off his stride or hinder his devotion to God.

He went home, to the place he was accustomed to praying at – he opened his windows so they could hear him, he knelt down, at the three times a day he was accustomed to praying, and he prayed – JUST LIKE HE ALWAYS HAD!
You see, that's the key = Nothing changed for Daniel!

He kept doing what he had *always* done.

Why? Because what he did was obedience to the Lord!

In 2 Chronicles 6:36-39 Solomon spoke these words to God in prayer -

- 36 "When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to a land far off or near,**
- 37 if they take thought in the land where they are taken captive, and repent and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, we have committed iniquity, and have acted wickedly';**
- 38 if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, where they have been taken captive, and pray toward their land which Thou hast given to their fathers, and the city which Thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for Thy name,**
- 39 then hear from heaven, from Thy dwelling place, their prayer and supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive Thy people who have sinned against Thee.**

Daniel knew *why* he and his fellow Jews were in Babylon, they had rebelled against God and were suffering His just judgment.

So Daniel did what Solomon said, in hopes of the nation being restored.

This is why he opened his windows toward Jerusalem; it's what Solomon had proposed in 2 Chronicles.

As for praying 3 times a day, in Psalm 55:16-18 we find this . . .

16 As for me, I shall call upon God, And the LORD will save me.

17 Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice.

18 He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me, For they are many who strive with me.

David spoke of praying 3 times a day for God's salvation.

Daniel is simply following godly David's example.

Make careful note of that – none of this was out of the ordinary – Daniel had always prayed like this.

He was just careful now *not* to change his godly habits simply because they've been banned.

You know, a lot of people today would have counseled Daniel to maintain his prayer life, but to be more *discreet* about it.

After all, there was nothing specific in the Bible that *demand*ed he give his enemies a reason to find an accusation against him.

Wouldn't it have been wiser for him to lay low for a month – or at least to pray quietly?

In Daniel's mind, there was no alternative.

Remember, Daniel was incredibly wise, and he knew what these guys were after - his death!

If he had lain low for a month, or had done anything differently than was his normal habit of prayer, he knew in these guys minds it would have looked like a response of fear on his part, and Daniel was not about to let these guys intimidate him or move him to back down in his fervency and devotion to the Lord.

So he did what he had always done!

He goes home, opens his windows, kneels down, and 3 times a day, prays – apparently out loud, to Yahweh.

For Daniel, it was an issue of *integrity*!

To refrain from prayer, or to in any way give these false men cause to question his devotion to Yahweh would have been in his eyes a break-down in his character.

And character was something Daniel had proven for years, since the days of his youth, he would never compromise on.

From the royal diet in Chapter 1, to the opportunity to grandstand in his powers as a dream interpreter in chapter 2.

His friends example in the challenge of the fiery furnace of chapter 3, and his refusal to soft-sell the hard message of God to Belshazzar in chapter

5, all this commended Daniel as a man of principle and character, whose integrity was not to be broken.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, "A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you, and were helped by you, will remember you when forget-me-nots are withered. Carve your name on hearts, and not on marble."

In 1789, an uncertain George Washington was urged to seek the presidency of the new nation by Governor Morris, a Pennsylvania delegate to the Constitutional Convention.

Morris wrote Washington: "No constitution is the same on paper and in life. The exercise of authority depends upon personal character. Your cool steady temper is indispensably necessary to give a firm and manly tone to the new government."

Morris was absolutely right – and this is something largely lost in the teaching of American history today –

The reason the *American Experiment* worked was not simply because brilliant and godly men devised a clever Constitution, but because it was those same men who laid down their lives at great peril to ensure it would be carried out.

In the Federalist Papers, the Founders remarked again and again that the American system would only work when people of sterling character and integrity governed.

That our system of a democratic republic would only work if the people were moral and self-governed.

Character is everything! It is the backbone of our whole system.

Sad that this lesson is lost on our modern society.

In ancient China, the people desired security from the barbaric hordes to the north and west; so they built the great Chinese wall.

It was so high they knew no one could climb over it and so thick that nothing could break it down.

They settled back to enjoy their security.

During the first hundred years of the wall's existence, China was invaded three times.

Not once did the barbarians break down the wall or climb over the top.

Each time they bribed a gatekeeper and then marched right through the gates.

The Chinese were so busy relying upon the walls of stone that they forgot to teach *integrity* to their children.

So here we are today in 21st Century America.

We have our vast and powerful military and the nuclear wall that acts as a deterrent to help keep peace through strength.

But now it seems every month reveals some new traitor who sells the secrets of our national defense.

I like Ted Engstrom's definition of integrity: Integrity is doing what you said you would do. It means you keep your promises.

When you promise to be faithful to your mate, integrity means you stay with

that person no matter what -- for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health.

If you promise the Lord that you will give Him the glory in all things, integrity means you keep on doing that whether you're reduced to nothing or exalted to the highest pinnacle on earth.

If you promised a friend that you would return a call, integrity means you return it.

If you promised your child that you would spend Saturday together, integrity means you keep that appointment.

A promise is a holy thing, whether made to God -- or to a child.

Daniel had made a promise to God to serve Him all his days.

Integrity meant keeping that promise – even when keeping that promise imperiled his life.

And of course, his enemies are ecstatic!

This is what they were counting on – Daniel's integrity!

Now they have the ammunition they need to shoot him down.

They went to a place where they could hear him; apparently his habits of prayer were well known and they knew were to stand.

¹¹Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. ¹²And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, 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 does not alter."

¹³So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

Why do these men point out Daniel's heritage as a Jew?

Good grief, Daniel has served faithfully in the court of Babylon for 70 years!
But they point out his nationality.

This is nothing less than blatant and unreasoned anti-Semitism.

They seek to inflame Darius' hatred of Daniel, by mentioning his ethnic origins.

But Darius' reaction is far different from what they were expecting.

¹⁴And the king, when he heard *these words*, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. ¹⁵Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that *it is* the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

You know what Darius was doing? He was counseling with the lawyers and the experts in the law to find a loophole through which they could rescue Daniel.
But there was none.

Darius realizes in a flash that he's been duped and this is nothing other than an

incredibly vicious political attack on a good man.

Darius is both heart-sick at Daniel's fate, and furious at these men for playing him the fool.

Finally they come to him and demand he carry out the penalty.

Which is to cast Daniel into a lion's den.

While we have no ancient Middle East account of lion's dens, there are some more recent dens in Morocco which may give us a pattern for how they were laid out.

They consist of a large open-air pit with a partition wall spanning the middle.

In this middle wall is a door that can be opened and closed from above.

The keepers would entice the lions from one chamber to another with food, then close the door and enter the vacant side for cleaning.

The top of the pit is surrounded by a wall about 5' high, which people can look over and down into the den to see the lions, as in our modern zoos.

Lion's were kept by rulers as a way to show their majesty and splendor.

And they occasionally served as a form of execution that was considered especially heinous.

¹⁶So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast *him* into the den of lions. *But* the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." ¹⁷Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.

The opening of this pit was apparently small enough that it could be covered by a cap stone.

As Daniel was lowered into the vacant side of the den, Darius looked on and encouraged him with words of comfort that Yahweh would protect him.

Actually, the wording suggests that Darius is actually *praying* for Daniel's deliverance.

He says, "MAY you God deliver you!"

And note that Daniel's devotion to Yahweh was well-known to Darius!

So, there he is, this 80-some year old man, sitting in the dark rock cut room, the keeper opens the door between the two sides of the den, and the capstone is lowered over the opening.

While Darius sets his seal on the stone to ensure it isn't moved – Daniel hunkers down as the purring sound of hungry cats in the other room reaches his ears.

Then he hears their padding feet as they slink into his side of the chamber.

He feels their body heat.

They come over and give him a good sniff, their long whiskers brushing his face, and their moist breath hot on his neck.

There's a moment of tense anxiety as he waits to see if they are going to treat him like a Sausage, Prophet burger, but the next sensation is a delight.

A tongue licks his cheek.

Then the big animal lies down next to him, puts a massive paw in his lap.
He reaches out and places his hand in the thick, rich fur and begins to rub the throat of the lion.
A loud purring is heard in the den, and soon Daniel is surrounded by the prostrate forms of sleeping lions.
The chill of the Babylonian night is driven away by their warmth, and Daniel stretches out, laying his head on one of their sides.
He too falls asleep, safe in God's protecting embrace.

Compare Daniel to the king -

18Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. **19**Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. **20**And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

Darius knew that it was entirely in the realm of possibility that Daniel's God could have delivered him!

In fact, it was the hope and prospect of this deliverance that had kept him awake all night.

Darius apparently cared for Daniel or the king would have forgotten all about the execution of just one more inconsequential servant.

No, this whole thing has Darius worked up and extremely agitated.

He is deeply concerned for Daniel, and extremely angry about being duped.

So he goes running to the den at first light to see what's become of his trusted counselor.

21Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! **22**My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."

23Now the king was exceedingly 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 injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

24And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

Darius knew that he had been made nothing more than a pawn for the political aims of these governors and satraps and so he had them brought to the den and thrown in.

His command that their families also be executed with them was unjust but it reveals just how great his fury was.

Lest anyone think Daniel had survived because the keepers had overfed the lions the night before, when the conspirators are cast in, their bodies never even reach the floor!

The lions snag them out of the air and rip them to pieces!

It's clear that Daniel's deliverance was a miraculous act of God.

25 Then King Darius wrote:

To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.

26 I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom *men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.*

For He *is* the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom *is the one* which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion *shall endure to the end.*

27 He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

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

Darius' proclamation here sounds reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar's after Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego's deliverance from the fiery furnace.

Indeed, two pagan kings have come to speak of Yahweh as the Living God who delivers, who endures forever, whose kingdom will not be destroyed, and whose dominion is eternal.

CONCLUSION

And once again, we see the theme of Daniel brilliantly revealed – God is sovereign.

Earthly kingdoms may change – the Babylonians fall to the Persians, but God is still on His heavenly throne and over-rules in the affairs of earth.

Even to the point that he shuts lion's mouths, and changes their normal instincts from carnivore to pillow.

You know, I think what happened in that lion's den was this:

The Prophet Isaiah tells us that in the Millennium, when nature is delivered from the Curse and harmony is restored to the Creation . . . [Isaiah 11]

6 “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.

7 The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.

I think what happened in that lion's den that night was that God performed a little

case of time-travel for Daniel and his lion-friends and put them in the age of Christ's reign.

Daniel's faith in God resulted in the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth, and suddenly, there was peace and harmony in nature.

This is what God wants you and I to do today – to live by faith in Him, no matter what the world throws at us, no matter how it opposes us or conspires to strip us of our faith and confidence in God.

May God give us the grace and courage to stand like Daniel's – people of integrity and character – keeping our promise to love and serve Him.