

EXERCISE YOUR CHRISTIAN CONVICTIONS

6 It seemed good to Darius to appoint one hundred and twenty satraps over the kingdom and [station them] throughout the whole realm, ²with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. ³Now this Daniel was distinguished among the administrators and the satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit; so the king planned to set him over the whole realm. ⁴Then the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs. But they could find no instance of negligence or corruption, because he was faithful—he was guilty of neither negligence nor corruption. ⁵Finally these men said, We shall not find any basis for charges against this Daniel unless we find something against him with regard to the law of his God.

⁶So these administrators and satraps went together to the king and said to him, King Darius, live forever! ⁷All the administrators of the kingdom, along with the prefects and the satraps, the advisors and the governors, have agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce an injunction that whoever makes a petition to any god or [any] man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. ⁸Now, O king, issue the injunction and put it into writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed. ⁹So King Darius put the edict into writing and signed the injunction. ¹⁰Even when Daniel knew that the edict had been signed [into law], he went into his house (now the windows in his upstairs room were open towards Jerusalem) and got down on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, just as he had done before.

¹¹Then these men went together and found Daniel making petitions and prayers before his God. ¹²So they went and spoke to the king about the king's injunction. Have you not signed an injunction declaring that every man who makes a petition to any god or to [any] man within thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den? The king replied, That is true, [it is] in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed. ¹³Then they said to the king, That Daniel, who is one of the exiles of Judah, disregards you, O king, and the injunction that you have signed. He continues to make his petitions three times a day. ¹⁴When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and he labored until sunset to save him. ¹⁵Then these men assembled before the king and said to the king, Be aware, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no injunction or statute that the king issues can be altered. ¹⁶So the king gave the order and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, Your God, whom you continually serve, will deliver you. ¹⁷A stone was brought and placed over the entrance of the den. The king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet of his nobles, so that nothing about Daniel's sentence could be changed.

¹⁸Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating, and no entertainment was brought to him. And he could not sleep. ¹⁹Very early in the morning the king arose and hurried to the lions' den. ²⁰When he approached the den, he cried out to Daniel in an anguished voice. The king called out to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to save you from

the lions? ²¹Then Daniel answered the king, O king, live forever! ²²My God has sent his angel and he has shut the lions' mouths. They have not harmed me, because I have been found to be innocent before him; and, also, I have done nothing wrong before you, O king. ²³The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. So Daniel was lifted out of the den. No kind of wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴At the king's command, the men who had brought the charges against Daniel were brought in and they threw them into the lions' den—they, their children, and their wives. Before they [even] reached the bottom of the pit, the lions overpowered them and broke their bones to pieces.

²⁵Then King Darius wrote [this proclamation] to all the peoples, nations, [and men of every] language who dwell in all the world: May you have an abundance of peace. ²⁶I issue a decree [commanding] that in every part of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God and he endures forever. His kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed and his dominion shall continue to the end [of time]. ²⁷He delivers and rescues; he performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth. He has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. ²⁸So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and Cyrus the Persian. (Dan. 6:1-28)

Introduction

What would happen if the practice of the Christian faith became illegal? Would such a decree have any great impact on your life? Would it alter the everyday course of your behavior? Would you find yourself changing your daily conduct as a Christian so as to avoid detection and prosecution?

Devotion to the LORD did in fact become illegal in Daniel's day—but he continued to faithfully exercise his Christian convictions.

Like Daniel, we face various temptations to compromise or conceal our Christian convictions, even when we are legally free to express those convictions. But, like Daniel, let us resist those temptations to compromise or conceal our Christian faith and convictions; let us be faithful to Exercise Our Christian Convictions.

I. Exercise Your Christian Convictions, in the Secular Sphere as well as the Religious (Dan. 6:1-5)

With the coming of the Medes and Persians to power, there came a reorganization of the government under King Darius. Darius set up 120 satraps (governors) over the kingdom, each one assigned to a particular province of the former Babylonian empire. Over these 120 satraps Darius appointed three administrators. We are told that Daniel was one of these three administrators. Furthermore, we learn that Daniel was promoted above the other two administrators (vs. 3.)

The reason for this promotion is the fact that Daniel *“possessed an extraordinary spirit.”* Note that this promotion was not the result of a sovereign act of God working independently of this man Daniel as was the case in Daniel 2:47-48

(where he is promoted by Nebuchadnezzar) and 5:29 (where he is offered the position of third highest ruler of the kingdom by Belshazzar.) In both of those cases Daniel's promotion was the result of his ability to supply the king with the interpretation of his dream (chapter 2) and the divine handwriting on the wall (chapter 5), both of which interpretations Daniel received directly as a revelation from the LORD. In distinction to the former two, this present promotion was the result of the sanctifying work of God operating in the man.

By this time Daniel was a venerable old man of approximately 80 years of age. From his youth he had demonstrated himself to be a man of wisdom and discretion, as seen by his interaction with the Babylonian steward who had been appointed over him and the other young trainees:

Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹²I beg you, test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the king's choice food; and treat your servants in accordance with what you see. ¹⁴Then Daniel replied with wisdom and tact to Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, the one who had been sent to put to death the wise men of Babylon. (Dan. 2:11-14)

Furthermore, Daniel had consistently demonstrated himself to be a man wholeheartedly committed to Christ: *"Now Daniel resolved in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food, nor with the wine he was given to drink; therefore, he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself"* (Dan. 1:8.) Daniel had also gained much experience in the administration of the affairs of state, having been appointed to high positions in the Babylonian government (Dan. 1:19; Dan. 2:48-49.)

It was evident to all that the Spirit of God was at work in his life:

Daniel came into my presence—he is called Belteshazzar, named after my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him—and I related the dream to him. I said, ⁹O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, [I ask you to] tell me [the meaning of] the visions I saw in my dream and the interpretation [of the dream]. (Dan. 4:8-9), such was the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar

There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father he was found to have insight and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods. The king, Nebuchadnezzar your father, [I say,] the king, your father, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldean [astrologers], and soothsayers; ¹²because an extraordinary spirit and knowledge and understanding, the ability to interpret dreams and explain enigmas and solve perplexing problems, was found in this Daniel whom the

king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be summoned, and he will provide the interpretation. (Dan. 5:11-12), such was the testimony of the queen mother

Having walked with the LORD since his youth, and having attained to a ripe old age, Daniel's life must have exhibited a high degree of godliness and Christ-like character—we are called to exhibit the same in our lives as Christians:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰We pray this in order that you may walk in a way that is worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God ... (Col. 1:9-10)

From verse 3 we thus learn of the king's intention to set Daniel over the whole realm, second only to Darius himself. But no sooner do we learn of this plan to promote Daniel, than we learn of a plot against Daniel—perpetrated by the other administrators and no doubt motivated by jealousy (vs. 4.)

Initially, they sought to find occasion against Daniel with regard to the kingdom; they search for some impropriety, some indiscretion, some scandal or incompetence: *“the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs.”* But their search to dig up a scandal or a case of incompetence proves futile, because Daniel was faithful: *“they could find no instance of negligence or corruption, because he was faithful—he was guilty of neither negligence nor corruption.”* Daniel was faithful to the LORD, and he recognized that a chief part of his faithfulness to the LORD was the faithful discharge of his everyday business affairs—faithfulness in discharging the common duties of life. As a result, there was neither incompetence (due to neglect) nor scandal to be found.

Having failed to discredit Daniel in matters pertaining to his everyday business affairs, these men are forced to look elsewhere. Indeed, they are forced to create a situation that would cause Daniel to be found to be an offender. They choose to make their plot revolve around Daniel's devotion to the LORD. They choose to do so because Daniel's faith in the LORD and devotion to the LORD were well known. When King Darius *“approached the den, he cried out to Daniel in an anguished voice. The king called out to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to save you from the lions?”* (Dan. 6:20.)

If wicked men were to plot against us, would they be forced to contrive a scheme revolving around our devotion to Christ? Would they be forced to do so because they could find nothing chargeable in our lives, and because our devotion to Christ is so well known? Let us exercise our Christian convictions, in the secular sphere as well as the religious.

II. Exercise Your Christian Convictions, with Steadfastness (Dan. 6:6-15)

These men now contrive to create a situation in which Daniel's faithfulness to the LORD will cause him to become "unfaithful" to the king.

Acting in concert, and under the guise of speaking for all the officials of the realm, these men petition the king to "*issue an edict and enforce an injunction*" (vs. 7)—i.e.; an irrevocable law, like an amendment to the constitution. What is this new law they desire to have enacted?

They appear before the king with this request: "*All the administrators ... have agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce an injunction that whoever makes a petition to any god or any man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den.*" Here is the practical abolition of all religion by declaring it illegal to engage in prayer or petition to any god. Here is the absolute deification of the State: for 30 days men are forbidden to call upon the LORD (or upon any of their idols) for any aid whatsoever; instead, they must look solely to the State for their every need—here is the ultimate welfare state.

So we find that a few conniving individuals, operating out of ulterior motives, employing flattery and urgency, are able to cause the king to sign into law this diabolical decree. Upon learning that this petition has been signed into law, how does Daniel react?

Even when Daniel knew that the edict had been signed [into law], he went into his house (now the windows in his upstairs room were open towards Jerusalem) and got down on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, just as he had done before. (Dan. 6:10)

Daniel did not alter the normal course of his devotions; nor did he alter the content of his devotions: he continued **to give thanks** unto the LORD his God. As was true of the Psalmist, so also of Daniel: "*I will bless Jehovah at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth*" (Psl. 34:1.) Contrast Daniel's response to adversity and trial with the counsel of Job's wife gives to her husband after he has been allowed to suffer afflictions:

Then his wife said to him, Are you still maintaining your integrity? Renounce God and die! ¹⁰But he said to her, You are speaking like one of the foolish women. Shall we [only] accept good from the hand of God, and shall we not accept calamity? In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (Job 2:9-10)

Daniel exercised his devotion to the LORD with unwavering steadfastness, even though it meant facing a den full of hungry lions. Let us be faithful to exercise our Christian convictions, and to do so with steadfastness. How can we do so? We can do so by realizing that it is God's will that we do so:

Live your life only in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that if I come and see you—or if I remain absent what I will hear about you is that you are standing firm in one spirit, and with one soul are contending for the faith of the gospel,²⁸ and that you are in no way being intimidated by those who oppose you. [Your firm stand] is a clear indication of their condemnation, but of your salvation. (Phil. 1:27-28)

We can do so by realizing that the LORD Himself will stand by us to support us:

Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; surely, I will help you; surely, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isa. 41:10)

We can do so by relying upon the Holy Spirit; as the Apostle Paul testified, *“I am able to do all things by him who gives me strength”* (Phil. 4:13.)

We can do so by realizing that nothing can compare with the blessing of Christ and His communion; as the Psalmist confesses, *“your lovingkindness is better than life”* (Psl. 63:3.)

III. Exercise Your Christian Convictions, Knowing that You will Surely Be Rewarded (Dan. 6:11-28)

Having laid their trap, the conspirators now proceed to spring it on their innocent victim: they catch Daniel in the very act of his devotions (vs. 11.) Having witnessed the “crime,” they now bring Daniel before the king and demand that the royal edict be enforced (vs.12-15.) When all efforts of the king fail to spare Daniel, he is led away to the lions’ den (vs. 16.) Then follows the account of Daniel’s miraculous deliverance from the mouth of the lions (vs. 21-23.) But consider this familiar account more closely.

First, Daniel is an innocent man whose enemies are motivated by jealousy (vs. 3-4.) The Lord Jesus was the truly innocent man whose enemies were motivated by envy against Him: *“[Pilate] knew that because of envy [the Jewish leaders] had handed Jesus over to him”* (Matt. 27:18.)

Second, Daniel set his face towards Jerusalem in his prayer time; fully knowing that to do so meant death (vs. 10.) The Lord Jesus steadfastly set His face towards Jerusalem knowing all that lay in store for Him: *“As the time approached for him to be received [into heaven], Jesus resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem”* (Lk. 9:51.)

Third, Daniel was apprehended by his enemies while he is alone, engaged in prayer (vs. 11.) The Lord Jesus was taken into custody just as He finished His time of prayer in the garden of Gethsemane:

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, Sit here while I go over there and pray ... ⁴⁵Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Get up, let us go! Here comes my betrayer! ⁴⁷While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. (Matt. 26:36,45-47)

Fourth, all the efforts of the king fail to secure Daniel's release (vs. 14-15.) Pilate's efforts to secure the release of the Lord Jesus likewise ended in failure:

Desiring to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. ²¹But they kept shouting, Crucify him! Crucify him! ²²For the third time he spoke to them: Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will chastise him and release him. ²³But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. (Lk. 23:20-23)

Fifth, a stone is brought and sealed to the mouth of the lions' den, which would become Daniel's "tomb" (vs. 17.) The tomb where they laid the Lord Jesus was likewise sealed with a stone; the Jewish leaders instructed Pilate to *"give the order for the tomb to be made secure. ⁶⁵Pilate said to them, You have a guard: go, make it as sure as ye can. ⁶⁶So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard"* (Matt. 27:64-66.)

Sixth, there is a very early morning visit to Daniel's "tomb" (vs.19.) Likewise, the women paid an early morning visit to the tomb of the Lord Jesus: *"And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they came to the tomb"* (Mk. 16:2.)

Seventh, upon finding Daniel to be miraculously delivered from death, sorrow gives way to great joy (vs. 19-23.) Upon discovering that the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead, sorrow was turned into great joy: *"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. ²⁰After he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord"* (Jn. 20:19-20.)

Eighth, upon examining him, Daniel is found to be completely whole, no harming having come to him (vs. 23b.) Likewise, the Lord Jesus demonstrated Himself to be alive and completely whole:

He said to them, Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does

not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. ⁴⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. (Lk. 24:38-40)

What is the meaning of this striking parallel between Daniel and the Lord Jesus? The significance of the comparison is this: the life of the Lord Jesus—in all of its aspects—is reproduced in the lives of His people. Daniel experienced “*the fellowship of [Christ’s] suffering*” (Phil. 3:10) and the glory that followed. As the Apostle Paul writes to the Romans:

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings so that we may also share in his glory. (Rom. 8:16-17)

By the grace of God, let us be faithful to exercise our Christian convictions, knowing that we shall surely be rewarded:

If any man would serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant also be. If any man serves me, the Father will honor him. (Jn. 12:26)