



Daniel 6:10-17
He Will Deliver You

10 Now 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.

11 Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

12 And 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."

13 So 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."

14 And 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.

15 Then 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."

16 So 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."

17 Then 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.

This Sermon will be essentially a character study of two men, Daniel and Darius, not Daniel and the wicked nobles, we'll consider the wicked nobles next week. I do this because in one sense, a contrast between Daniel and the nobles is too easy, too stark and when it comes to examples I find I learn most in those "**Hey that's me**" or "**Hey that's how I need to be**" moments, (don't you?) and if half of the contrast consists of characters who really are uniformly awful we just don't see their application to ourselves. I mean would you learn more from a study comparing David to Goliath or David to *Saul*?

So I want to look at Darius, because in him we have a man who is a pagan, but one we would have probably called called a nice guy, a man who generally tried to do the right thing, but who is nonetheless doing what is right in his own eyes, being pragmatic, and following the world's wisdom and who ends up compromising at critical points.

Proverbs 29:5 says "***A man who flatters his neighbor Spreads a net for his feet.***" It's a pity that Darius wasn't familiar with that Proverb or he might have realized that his nobles were up to no good when they came to him with their proposal that a law be passed that would make it a crime to petition anyone but the king. Perhaps Darius thought "*they love me, they really love me*" or maybe he cloaked

his vanity with some sort of self-assurance that such a law would flush out anyone disloyal to his government.

What Darius doesn't do, however, is consult Daniel before he signed the law they proposed, which was obviously a big mistake. Darius had come to rely on Daniel, he had become an "indispensable man" to him. And he had found that he was wise and honest and honorable and pious. So I often wonder, why didn't he ask for Daniel's opinion of the law since he trusted him most? Well, I think that there are two possible answers, the first is that with so many nobles pressing him to pass a flattering law that he was simply afraid to upset them by delaying giving an answer, the other is that he liked the idea so much that he had made up his mind on the spot, and had no desire to hear Daniel's possibly negative advice.

I've unfortunately seen that principle in operation, I've seen believers reject the advice of other believers and go to unbelievers because they want what a Christian knows he shouldn't give, they want flattery, they want their egos stroked.

Pride and Vanity can cause us to want to hear only the advice we agree with, but often the cost of doing that is that we do not hear the wise counsel that would have saved us from disaster. For instance, in 1 Kings 12 Rehoboam, Solomon's son is petitioned by his subjects who ask him to lighten their burden of over-taxation. His father's wiser older advisors tell him: ***"If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."***

But that isn't what he wants to hear, he is a proud man who wants to be even mightier than his father, so he favors more despotism not less - ***"But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him."***

They give Rehoboam the arrogant advice he wants to hear, he tells them he will increase their tax burdens and he ends up splitting the kingdom in two. A fellow by the name of George the III ended up doing something remarkably similar a couple of thousand years later because he too would not listen to wise advice regarding listening to the people and instead answered harshly and lost the American colonies as a result.

Brothers and Sisters, the application here is obvious, choose your advisors, your counselors, and your pastors wisely, not according to rules like *they tell me what I want to hear, or they are my peers*, but rather according to conditions like, *do they walk with God? Do they honor his word? Are they wise? Have they a track record of giving sound advice?* Anyone can tell you what you want to hear, Get your advice from the people who will tell you what you need to hear.

Darius didn't and so he realizes too late after the noble's goon squad has visited Daniel's residence and found him praying just as they expected, that they didn't propose this law to honor him, but solely in order to destroy his favorite Daniel.

He's been made a fool of at every turn, they even got him to confess this Lex Rex principle that in the Persian Empire, unlike the Babylonian empire the Law is the final authority and even the king can't change it.

Darius is very displeased with himself for being outmaneuvered by his nobles, so he tries to get Daniel off the hook, he probably tries first to find some legal way that this law doesn't apply to what Daniel is

doing, and when he can't do that, he probably tried to get the nobles not to press the charge, but he doesn't rescind his decree. ***And he should have done that regardless of precedent.*** You see brothers and sisters, whenever observing the laws of men would force us to go against God's laws, then we must not obey those laws. Daniel had already followed that principle and continued to pray only to God. When the Apostles were commanded by the Sanhedrin to stop teaching and preaching in Christ's name, they answered "***We ought to obey God rather than men.***" Nothing is higher than God's law, and nothing can bind you to break it. If you make a promise, for instance, to steal something for someone, then that is a promise **you must not keep**. So the law of the Medes and the Persians cannot bind the king to judicially murder a man who was doing what was right. But Darius is apparently more fearful of his nobles than Daniel's God, so he decided to do what his own conscience told him was wrong, which is never a safe place to be, regardless of how necessary it seems. ***Never allow that to happen to you, never allow circumstances to dictate whether you do what is right or not. If Luther had allowed circumstances to determine whether he did right or wrong, he would never have given his "Here I stand speech" on the floor of the Diet of Worms, and certainly Daniel would not have kept praying.***

So Darius gives the command, and Daniel is thrown in the Den amongst these hungry man-eating lions. Now here the nobles add insult to injury, they show that they do not trust Darius, so after the Den is sealed, they make sure he can't sneak back in the dark and attempt to get Daniel out by adding their own seals to the rock. No doubt that too made Darius realize just how useless and self-seeking his nobles really were.

But Darius, even though he doesn't worship the same God as Daniel, knows the power of Daniel's God, he probably read of the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, so he know it is possible for this God to deliver in ways that his own gods cannot. So he says, to Daniel "He will deliver you" with probably something less than absolute confidence. And he will spend a very troubled night worrying about his friend and probably what might happen to his government.

Let's briefly now look at Daniel. What a contrast he is! Have you ever noticed how Daniel is the only one at peace throughout all this? And that is in spite of the fact that he is the one who is outwardly in the most danger. Although he is a captive, he is stronger than his conquerors. You might say that in all these things he is more than a conqueror.

Now why is that? ***Because Daniel walked by Faith and Not by Sight.***

He had supreme confidence in the Lord and in His Promises. He knew, that the God he served was sovereign over all these events, and that they would ultimately work for his good. He knew that God had said "those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." And that even in this situation He was going to keep that promise.

He knew that even if he was killed, he would lose nothing and that he could never be separated from his god. Brothers and Sisters, Daniel was the kind of man who feared disobeying God more than men, and sin more than death. And he knew by Faith in God's promises that he could reach heaven just as surely from the Lion's Den as anywhere else. So he wasn't afraid.

Richard Baxter framed the secret of Daniel's peace beautifully in his "Saints Everlasting Rest": ***"This is the noble advantage of faith: it can look on the means and end together. The great reason of our impatience and censuring of God, is that we gaze on the evil itself, but fix not our thoughts on***

what is beyond it. They that saw Christ only on the cross, or in the grave, shook their heads and thought him lost; but God saw him dying, buried, rising, glorified; and all this at one view. Faith will, in this, imitate God, so far as it hath the glass of a promise to help it. We see God burying us under ground, but we foresee not the spring, when we shall all revive. Could we but clearly see heaven, as the end of all God's dealings with us, surely none of his dealings could be grievous. If God would once raise us to this life, we should find, that though heaven and sin are at a great distance; yet, heaven and a prison, or banishment; heaven and the belly of a whale, or a den of lions; heaven and consuming sickness, or invading death, are at no such distance. But as "Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced," so we, in our most forlorn state, might see that day when Christ shall give us rest, and therein rejoice. I beseech thee, Christian, for the honor of the Gospel, and for thy soul's comfort, leave not this heavenly art to be learned when, in thy greatest extremity, thou hast most need to use it. He that, with Stephen, "sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," will comfortably bear the shower of stones. "The joy of the Lord is our strength,"; and if we walk without our strength, how long are we likely to endure?"

That peace, that confidence, that heavenly view is why Daniel never saw the need to compromise his faith. Everyone around him is adrift, the nobles anxious for their jobs are fiendishly plotting to kill a good man, the king afraid of his nobles doing what he knows to be wrong.

But not Daniel. All the times in this book where he had an opportunity to tell the king the things he would want to hear, he instead tells him what he needs to hear.

All the times when pragmatism would tell him, just compromise, eat the king's food, "adjust" your interpretation of his dreams so its all good news all the time, lock the door and close the window when you pray for the next 30 days, he did not.

Brothers and Sisters, this was a man who lived to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And who had a living relationship with that God he honored. Later we'll see he knew himself to be a sinner and prayed one of the greatest prayers of confession in chapter 9. And yet he also knew what it was to be forgiven and redeemed and to have the Spirit of the Lord dwelling in him. So the way he conducted his life was very different from Darius, and although he did not follow his example, Darius preferred him to the pagan nobles.

Friends, let me ask you today, are you following in the way of Darius or Daniel? Darius liked the people of God, he liked to be around them, hear their advice... sometimes. He even believed in their god, but he didn't trust him, or love him or follow him. Well maybe you are saying, yes Andy I'm more of a Darius, but that's just the way I am. I can live with it. Ok, so I won't have that peace, you're talking about, that's ok, none of my other worldly friends and relatives have it either. And being around the saints is nice, but I guess I could leave that too.

Oh but friend it is so much more than that.

- 1) How do you think Darius would have faired with these nobles without Daniel?
- 2) Let me ask you, how do you think Darius would have faired in the Lion's Den?