

CULTURE SHOCK
Civil Disobedience
Daniel 6

We live in an age of unrest. We have seen things change in our nation and in our culture during our 240-year history that amaze us. When we hear some of the recent laws that have been passed that greatly restrict or even prohibit the free expression of our faith in the United States, we are tempted to fly into a **RIGHTEOUS RAGE**. We forget so quickly that we have been blessed all these years to live in a nation that began with **LEADERS** who had faith in God and were committed to honor the principles of his Word, but we are no longer a Christian nation. In reality, the United States has never has been a Christian nation; only a nation that had a vast number of Christians! We should not be surprised therefore when a nation now comprised of mostly non-believers passes laws that are not based on biblical faith and morality. We must not panic, and we must not act dishonorably. In fact, we must learn how to respond to these changes with faith and love and courage and grace. We are called to be **LIGHTS** in the darkness, not **HATERS** of those who walk in darkness. This world is not our eternal home, and we cannot force it to become so. We can only live and speak in a manner that awakens people to the reality and the beauty of the Kingdom of God. **My goal in this message is to give us BIBLICAL INSTRUCTIONS about how we are to conduct ourselves when our culture and our government go against our faith.**

Nations rise and fall. Kingdoms come and go. There was a time when the kingdom of Babylon was the undisputed champion of the world as far as kingdoms go. But this “Head of Gold” fell almost quietly in a secret invasion through the city’s strong defenses, and the Medo-Persian Empire (the Arms of Silver) rose to prominence in its place. God sovereignly planned this even though neither of these kingdoms acknowledged this at the outset. They would learn it the hard way. Daniel was present at the birth of both of these nations. He also served the purposes of God right in the heart of both of these governments during the course of his 70+ years in Babylon. His story inspires me and instructs me. We need the lessons of his life, courage, and faith in our 21st Century existence. He shocked two different nations and generations for God. Here is the next stage of his story: **Daniel 6:1-3 NLT**

1 Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces, and he appointed a high officer to rule over each province. 2 The king also chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the high officers and protect the king's interests. 3 Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel's great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire.

A good king surrounds himself with worthy people. Darius designed an extensive governmental structure, and he began to put key people in prominent places.

Darius had good sense. He could see that Daniel was an extraordinary man even at the ripe old age of 85, so he planned to put him in charge of all the people that he had put in charge of everyone else. The words used to describe Daniel in verse 3 are remarkable. The words “**proved himself more capable**” literally mean that he **STOOD OUT** among the crowd as a **LIGHT that shone brightly**. The term “**Daniel’s great ability**” was a reflection of his “**extraordinary spirit.**” This is the same term that Belshazzar’s mother used when she was speaking of Daniel. He was a man of **HIGH CAPACITY**. Darius might have been duped by some of his leaders, but it says a lot about him that he was willing to put a high capacity leader at the head of his team. **This is the sign of a great leader. A’s hire A’s, but B’s hire C’s and D’s, because they are not threatened by them.** You know, some people just stand out from everyone else. This is true in athletics and academics and occupations and administrations. In your place of employment, someone is going to stand out above all of the rest. It might even be you. But it might not! If it is not, will you respond to their success with joy, or **JEALOUSY**? Daniel’s peers resented his success, and they set out to **DESTROY** him. I bet that never happens at your office. The amazing thing is, they found out that it was not going to be as easy as they thought that it would be. I love the reason why. **Daniel 6:4 NLT**

4 Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy.

Daniel had no **SKELETONS** in his closet! I just did my civic duty this week when I went and voted in the primary. (Did you?) The thing is, some of those people running for office will probably be running for cover once the gossip hounds start rooting around in back rooms for the scoop on their sins. And they love bringing those sins into the light in order to make themselves look good. This type of political maneuvering did not start in our generation! It has been going on since governments existed. Problem was, Daniel messed with these leader’s **Medo-Persian MO!** They couldn’t drag up any dirt on him. He was squeaky clean. The words used to describe his character mean that he conducted himself in his occupation with integrity, honesty, and diligence. He did not **NEGLECT** any of his duties, and he was not **CORRUPT** in any of his affairs of state. **That is, he did not do anything he was NOT supposed to do, and he did not fail to do anything that he WAS supposed to do!** That is remarkable. It is no wonder that he stood out at work and was given promotion wherever he went. He was the guy everyone wanted to hire.

God’ people shock culture by the beliefs that actually shape their behavior!

Now, you and I must remember that Daniel did not work at the local church. He was not serving in a ministry setting around godly people and in ideal working conditions. He was still a slave and an exile from his homeland. He was working with a godless government around pagan political leaders. But he did his work with

absolute faithfulness in God. The Apostle Paul pleaded with us to have the same mindset about our work. **Colossians 3:23 NLT**

23 Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.

Does your work “check out” when the boss is not around? Do you spend time at work playing on the computer or talking with your friends on your cell phone? These are not minor issues. They are issues of INTEGRITY. Are you focused on honoring God in your workplace and doing your work as if God himself were your boss? That is how we are called to work. It is not a “pie in the sky” concept. Some people actually conduct themselves at work this way. And it shows! It also shows when you do not. Are you trying to justify something right now? Ask yourself why, and at what cost to your testimony. Daniel’s conduct was so exemplary that these conniving satraps figured out that there was only one way to trip Daniel up.

Daniel 6:5-9 NLT

5 So they concluded, "Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion." 6 So the administrators and high officers went to the king and said, "Long live King Darius! 7 We are all in agreement--we administrators, officials, high officers, advisers, and governors--that the king should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human--except to you, Your Majesty--will be thrown into the den of lions. 8 And now, Your Majesty, issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked." 9 So King Darius signed the law.

God’s people live godly lives in an ungodly world. This does not mean that they are perfect. Not by a long shot. But the goal of their behavior is obedience to God, no matter what. These satraps knew this about Daniel. They could easily observe his faith in action, and they set out to use this against him. Appealing to the king’s vanity, they lied to the king and told him that ALL of the administrators and satraps had agreed that passing this law was a good thing. **Be wary of anyone who uses “THEY SAID” and “EVERYONE AGREES” as the support for their agenda. If “they” and “everyone” aren’t there in body or at least by name, then “they” don’t exist! I have been threatened more times than I can count by “a lot of people.”** But the king fell for it, and he signed into law a very foolish edict that even he could not rescind. By the way, this is another evidence of Daniel’s accuracy about every kingdom being inferior to the head of gold (Babylon). Nebuchadnezzar could pass laws and change them on a whim as the absolute ruler of the kingdom, but Darius could not. The law of the Medes and Persians was irrevocable. This was the first stage of what would become representative government (which is good for the people when they are driven by good motives), but it was a deterioration of absolute monarchy. The Anti-Christ will bring that back at the end before the Beginning.

Daniel's response to the new law is instructive. We must pay attention to what he DID, and to what he DID NOT DO. He did not run to the king and beg to be excused from the law. He did not try to rally a CROWD for HIS CAUSE. He did not accuse God of failing him and then give up on his faith. And he did not STOP doing what he had been faithfully doing for 70 years, nor did he try to HIDE it. **Daniel 6:10 NLT**

10 But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down **as usual** in his upstairs room, with its **windows open** toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, **just as he had always done**, giving thanks to his God.

What are you going to do if a law is passed that prohibits YOU from sharing your faith in public? Will that anger you and cause you to organize a movement to send a petition to Washington to REPEAL that law? **The real question is, are you sharing your faith now?** If you are not, then you don't really "have a dog in that hung!" And I wonder, how will your TITHE change when your contributions to the church are no longer counted as a tax deduction? [This will not affect about 80% of you.] **The truth is, laws that prohibit the free exercise of our faith are not immediately troublesome for those who are not exercising those rights in the first place!** Daniel went to his upstairs room in front of his open window and prayed JUST AS HE HAD CONTINUALLY DONE since he was a teenager. He did not jump on some spiritual bandwagon. Prayer was his LIFE, not just a RIGHT that he had the OPTION to exercise. The wicked satraps spied on Daniel in his private room, and ran gleefully to the king to inform him that Daniel had disobeyed. **Daniel 6:11-14 NLT**

11 Then the officials went together to Daniel's house and found him praying and asking for God's help. 12 So they went straight to the king and reminded him about his law. "Did you not sign a law that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human--except to you, Your Majesty--will be thrown into the den of lions?" "Yes," the king replied, "that decision stands; it is an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked." 13 Then they told the king, "That man Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, is ignoring you and your law. **He still prays to his God three times a day.**" 14 Hearing this, the king was deeply troubled, and he tried to think of a way to save Daniel. He spent the rest of the day looking for a way to get Daniel out of this predicament.

The trap was now sprung! When the king was informed that Daniel had continued to pray (their knowledge of this was what incriminated them at the end!), the king threw a fit! He was angry with himself for letting himself be fooled by his own ego. The words "deeply troubled" actually mean "to make oneself odious." In other words, the king said "THIS STINKS!" And he knew that HE was responsible for the mess. **You know that you are having an impact if your leaders grieve when their rules punish their most loyal and productive followers.** But there was no

way out of this one. The satraps came back and literally forced the king to follow his own law. **Daniel 6:16-18 NLT**

16 So at last the king gave orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to him, "May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you." 17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed the stone with his own royal seal and the seals of his nobles, so that no one could rescue Daniel. 18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting. He refused his usual entertainment and couldn't sleep at all that night.

Do you think that it is a coincidence that Christians are being persecuted for their faith all over the world right now? Many have lost their life in Syria and Iraq simply because they follow Christ. Wake up. God's people have been the target of persecution since sin entered the world. Satan despises God and his people, and he is always actively attempting to put us out of the way. We will look in the next few weeks at what the Bible has to say about the Anti-Christ and Satan's plan for doing away with God's people once and for all. Daniel may have been the victim of a king's ego and the target of jealous, petty satraps, but they were just pawns of the evil one who wanted Daniel removed from the scene. Satan TARGETS those who pose a threat to his kingdom.

Some of you are in no danger. You have no target on your back because you do not seriously follow the Lord. Your t-shirt may have a church logo on it, but your conduct is anything but Christ-like. But if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God because of your faith in Christ, be of good cheer. **1 Peter 4:14-16, 19 NLT**

14 So be happy when you are insulted for being a Christian, for then the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. 15 If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs. 16 But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name! 19 So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.

Daniel suffered as one who was trusting God for his deliverance, and it SHOWED. This is true for all of us who will suffer for God's glory.

The power of your influence on culture is increased exponentially when you patiently suffer for your faith.

Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. both chose to respond to injustice with gracious courage, led by the words of Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. They led others to disobey unrighteous laws in a CIVIL manner. They did not fight back. And their patience rocked two nations. Daniel demonstrated this kind of patience

centuries ago by his response to this godless law that Darius passed, and it rocked a nation as well. Daniel did not even resist the king's right to put him in the lion's den. He was willing to accept the consequences of his obedience. **Daniel's response was NOT an act of REBELLION. It was in fact SUBMISSION to a higher Authority.** We must not get ourselves all "worked up" over injustice to the point that we get out of control and start accusing and attacking others. We must learn to follow the lead of those like Daniel who quietly stood for what was right, and who trusted God with the results. The king was hoping against hope that Daniel would somehow live through the night with the lions. **He even tries to encourage him by affirming his FAITHFUL SERVICE to his God.** And then the king spent the evening going without food or entertainment or sex. That is a big deal for a king! Early the next morning, he RAN to see if Daniel was still alive. **Daniel 6:20-22 NLT**

20 When he got there, he called out in anguish, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?" 21 Daniel answered, "Long live the king! 22 My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty."

Just imagine that moment! Daniel was alive because God had performed a miracle and saved his life. God does not ALWAYS save us from harm. **Hebrews 11** reminds us that some were maimed and killed because of their faith, and the **world was not worthy of them.** Daniel was spared because God sovereignly chose to save him. Daniel's faith was not based on whether or not God would save him, but he gave God all the glory for rescuing him. I do think that it is instructive that Daniel made it clear that he had not WRONGED the king by his prayer life. Again, his actions benefitted the king, and his prayers involved asking God to bless and prosper the king. **We must also choose to respond graciously to the skepticism and even fear that outsiders have about our faith so that they can see that we are not AGAINST THEM when we stand FOR something.** I urge you to take it even a step further.

We must learn to serve and celebrate people even when we cannot endorse their agenda.

Daniel was not a hater or a hurter. We must not be either. In the case of current issues concerning gay marriage, we must not lose sight of the fact that the people on the "other side" of this issue are precious to God. They are no more broken than any of us, and it is our privilege to recognize their value and to serve them as Christ did when he walked this earth! I believe that the homosexual community contains some of the most intelligent, gifted, and creative people on the face of the planet. And they are living with a very difficult reality. I have DEEP admiration for those Christians who struggle with same-sex attraction but who choose to honor God in their private lives. They are warriors for the Kingdom, and we need to affirm and support them.

And those who feel helpless against their same-sex attraction need our prayers and our love. God can be their refuge just as he is ours! **Ephesians 2:3-5 NLT**

3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. 4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

Daniel gave the king GRACE. This is just what Christ did for the lost. It is what we must do. This story really ends with a tragic twist. Daniel is delivered, but the men who instigated this ploy are thrown into the lion's den along with their FAMILIES. This was a key aspect of Medo-Persian Law. It was NOT what the law of God said (see **Deuteronomy 24:16**), nor what Daniel would have wanted. The king then made a proclamation that once again brought God's power before the entire culture and kingdom. **Daniel 6:26-27 NLT**

26 "I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel. For he is the living God, and he will endure forever. His kingdom will never be destroyed, and his rule will never end. 27 He rescues and saves his people; he performs miraculous signs and wonders in the heavens and on earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

Oh, that the Lord would use our troubles for his glory in this way. **We must get ourselves READY for the uncomfortable attention that we are going to get as believers in this generation because of culture's misunderstanding about our faith. Ready or not, here it comes!** Our response will either help to clear up their perspective and bring glory to God, or it will CONFIRM their suspicions about our self-righteous, hateful motives. We get to decide what kind of influence we will ultimately have. So, how are you doing?

Let's pray.