

DANIEL'S CONSISTENCY: PART 1 (6:1-18)

Let's start the night with a quick round of "Would You Rather." You know the game, would you rather "A" be true, or would you rather "B" be true...

- **Would you rather live a life of great adventure, purpose, and meaning?** It will involve times of great wealth and popularity, BUT there will also be times of great PAIN, and times where you're HATED by large groups of people.
- **Or live a safe, quiet, and comfortable life with very little adventure, purpose, and meaning?**

Most young people will *say* they choose "A," yet they'll go on to choose *safe* majors, for *safe* jobs, to live *safe* lives in *safe* neighborhoods.

But it does bring up a great question for ALL Christians – "Which of these *should* I pursue?" And the answer is... *both*. You see, on one hand, we're told in the NT to live quiet and peaceful lives...

1 Thessalonians 4:11 "And to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you."

So, Paul is telling us to: live a quiet life, obey the law, and mind your own business. But what happens when the law of the land requires you to violate God's Word? What happens when the culture won't *let* you live a quiet life and mind your own business – they try to force you to participate in sin. Or at least to celebrate it. How should we respond then? Tonight, Daniel is going to show us.

Now remember, at the end of chapter 5 we saw the fall of Babylon at the hand of a Persian ruler named Darius. And, as we're about to see, Daniel is once again pulled back into the mainstream of political power in this new empire. Why would this new king choose an old man like Daniel (around 85 yrs old) to serve in his empire? Because...

1. Daniel's character and consistency set him apart from others.

Even in his old age, Daniel is still the guy that everyone wants on their team...

Daniel 6:1-3 “It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps [think governors], to be throughout the whole kingdom;² and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss.³ Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.”

With every new government administration comes a shakeup – a reorganization. And Darius quickly organized the kingdom (which had been delegated to him by Cyrus) into a three-tiered system...

- 120 Satraps who were in charge of various regions throughout the kingdom.
- These 120 answered to three “high officials” who were above them.
- And those three high officials reported to Darius the king.

And verse 2 says all of this was put into place so “the king might not suffer loss.” In other words, this system was set up to make sure the king wasn’t getting cheated out of money that was flowing into the empire.

And as one of the top three officials, Daniel began to “distinguish” himself (*to shine or excel*) above the other two administrators. And because of this, King Darius planned to appoint Daniel “over the whole kingdom.” In other words, he was going to make him the prime minister of the Medo-Persian empire.²

And these other officials were NOT happy about this because they knew Daniel did things with “excellence” – he was honest and kept a close watch over the king’s affairs. So, Daniel’s interfering with their ability to skim off some of the king’s money and put it into their own pockets. Verse 2 says these men had to “give an account” to Daniel “so that the king might suffer no loss.”

It’s ironic that their title (satrap) means “kingdom protector” when the only thing they were trying to protect was their own self-interest! And Darius quickly recognized that Daniel was the *true* kingdom protector.

Think about it: Daniel had no skin in the game with this new empire. He could have said, “What do I care if this king gets ripped off by his employees? I never asked to be in this country anyway?” But Daniel

¹ Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon. (2004). *Targum Lexicon*. Hebrew Union College.

² Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Da 6:1–3). Joplin, MO: College Press.

serves God faithfully *regardless* of who's in charge of the government. Daniel's allegiance is to *God*, not a political party.

And Daniel was going to do exactly what Paul said – live a quiet life, mind your own business, and obey the law. But his honesty and consistency is interfering with the shady dealings among the other officials. So, they began looking for a way to get rid of Daniel, which leads us to our second point...

2. Daniel's consistency protected him from false accusations.

Daniel 6:4-9 "Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God." ⁶ Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction."

These corrupt officials began looking for some dirt on Daniel to accuse him of wrongdoing. But Daniel was such an outstanding public official, they couldn't find *any* evidence of corruption in his life. Why? Because...

- **His professional life was done with excellence.** Verse 3 says the king noticed an "excellent spirit" within Daniel. Because Daniel was faithful to his *God*, he was also faithful to the *king*. Daniel was excellent at his work.



Is this true of you? Whatever you do, is it done with excellence?

Right now, school is your job. Would your friends, teachers, and coaches say you have "an excellent spirit" within you? And not just

to get a pat on the back or make a bigger paycheck, but because it honors God to do excellent work. Does that describe you?

You see, work was established by God *before* the Fall. It's not a curse. Adam and Eve were originally put in charge of the Garden of Eden to cultivate/work it so that God's creation could flourish. Then their descendants were to begin spreading out over the earth to do the same. That's what an excellent work ethic does – it allows your school, team, company – *all of society* – to flourish!

One of the reasons they couldn't find any dirt on Daniel was because he did his job with excellence. But also...

- **His private life was lived with integrity.** When they couldn't find any corruption in his public life at work, they moved to his private life. Over and over in verse 4 it says they tried to "find" some fault with Daniel, but they couldn't.



If people searched your life right now, what would they find?

The word *integrity* is built off a word that means "one" or "same." In other words, Daniel was the same in his *public* life as he was in his *private* life. He had nothing to hide.

In fact, his enemies realized that there was only *one* area in Daniel's life that was vulnerable to their attack... his faith. And it wasn't because his faith was *weak* – it was because his faith was so *consistent*. In verse 5 they said, "We [can't] find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."

So, they came up with a plan to trick the king by playing to his ego. In verse 7 they said, "O King, we think there should be a law that no one prays to any god or man for 30 days, *except to you*." And any person who prays to *anyone* else during the 30 days would be executed in the lion's den.

They know they only need 30 days to bury Daniel with guilt because Daniel prays 3 times a day. So, by the end of 30 days, he'll break the law 90 TIMES!

Notice in verse 6 how all the high officials "**came in agreement**" to the king. It means they came as a mob – a large group. In Psalm 2:1 it's

described as “raging.” It’s the idea of a large mob of people who are raging – using great emotional energy to change public policy. But they’re not creating this law or policy to benefit their king or nation (though they *say* it is). No, they’re pushing this law or policy to pad their pockets and keep their power.

So, this new law placed Daniel in an awkward position. If he *obeyed* it, he wouldn’t be able to pray to God. If he *disobeyed* it, he would appear disloyal to the king. So, he’s got a choice to make, which leads us to...

3. Daniel’s consistency wasn’t shaken by threats.

Daniel 6:10-18 “When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. ¹² Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, “O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.” ¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.” ¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. ¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.” ¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!” ¹⁷ And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.”

Daniel shows us what to do when the laws of the land are suddenly against your sincerely held beliefs? And we see it in verse 10...

- **He went home to pray, not to the streets to protest.** *"He went to his house...and prayed."* Again, Daniel was trying to live a quiet and peaceful life, but when the law of the land violated *God's Law*, Daniel went with God. He didn't rage in the streets or stage a coup against the king. He fought his battles on his knees.
- **He wasn't contentious, but he wasn't a coward.** *"He went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem."* Daniel didn't use a megaphone, but he didn't close the blinds either. He wasn't trying to draw attention to himself, but he wasn't hiding either.

And sure enough, as these wicked men watched the window of Daniel's house, verse 11 says the old prophet appeared right on schedule "making petition and plea before his God."

- **He wasn't fearful, he was faithful.** *"He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed...as he had done previously."*

Daniel was consistent in his *professional* life, in his *personal* life, and in his *prayer* life. You see, this was *not* a "crisis prayer meeting." Daniel had been praying since before he was a teenager (which is why you need to start building spiritual habits when you're young).³

You might say, "Well all Daniel has to do is not pray for a month. People often forget to pray for a month at a time." But that's not an option for Daniel. Think about it: He would rather be eaten by lions than miss his daily conversations with God!

- **He didn't grumble; he was grateful.** When Daniel went upstairs to pray, it says he *"gave thanks before his God."* He wasn't grumbling about this new law, or the new administration, or the fact that his co-workers hated him for no reason. No, he was thanking God for His presence and power no matter the circumstances!

So, when Daniel's accusers saw him praying, they immediately went and told the king. And they told him that Daniel not only disobeyed the king, but he did it *three times every day*. In fact, in verse 13, they tell the king, "Daniel pays no attention to YOU" – they're trying to make it *personal*. They HATED Daniel and they wanted the king to hate him too.

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Da 6:1–28). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

But the king knew Daniel better than that. In fact, verse 14 says when the king heard their accusations, “He was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel.” He realized what a fool he had been. So, throughout that entire day the king “labored” to find a loophole in the law so he could rescue Daniel from going to the lion’s den.

Apparently, the king had until sunset to carry out the sentence before he was in violation of his own law. But at the end of the day, these corrupt officials came back to force the king’s hand. They reminded him that no Medo-Persian law could be revoked or altered.⁴

So, verse 16 says Darius was forced to have Daneil thrown into the den of lions and a stone was rolled over the entrance and sealed. And in verse 18, Darius went home and spent a *miserable* night in his palace where he fasted and canceled the evening’s “entertainment.”

He laid there all night wondering the same thing we’re wondering:



“What exactly will happen to Daniel in that dark pit surrounded by hungry lions?”

We’ll have to find out NEXT WEEK!

Small Groups

⁴ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Da 6:4–9). Joplin, MO: College Press.