

Lesson from a Sage

As we begin let’s remember something that will frame this message –

- This is some 75 years after Daniel was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar!
- He has been a high ranking government official for most of those years
- And now comes this event that most characterizes his life!

As we look at his story, think about the advice or the counsel that this wise old sage would give to us.

1 – Remember – the world is not your friend

- In verse 1 we are introduced to King Darius – a ruler of the Medo-Persian Empire –
- The question is “Who is this guy?”

-The Lord’s hand was on Daniel – what else can explain that he always ends up in prominent and influential positions?

-Commentaries will suggest that when the text says, “...and over them three high officials, of which Daniel was one...” could be translated or understood as “...of who Daniel was first...”

-At least we do know from the text that the king planned to “set him over the whole kingdom.”

-It makes sense to see that Daniel was above or soon to be above the other two officials, which would explain, in part, why they hated him so much – they were jealous!

-Here’s this lowly Hebrew – a Jew – and he’s over us!

-I think we are looking at one of many examples of anti-Semitism – a people hated by man but loved by God.

-So these guys look for a way to take Daniel out!

-Cancel culture at its finest -The world is not your friend! James 4:4

2 – Don’t let anything keep you from practicing your faith

-Here’s the amazing thing about Daniel –

-After all these years of living in the public eye...he is squeaky clean!

-Our desire is not to use the Bible to glorify people but to glorify the work of God in people – and clearly the good work of God is seen in Daniel!

-But they realize that if they are going to get him, it will have to be in relation to his devotion to his God.

-This is true religious persecution – It is because of his faith that he will be persecuted.

-This is the way it is today –

-Christians sincerely believe in a biblical, sexual ethic –

-But it is our adherence to that biblical, sexual ethic that will be the reason we are persecuted today.

-So right now it is good for us to set back and take notice of this blessed man Daniel and the counsel he would give to us! He would tell us that no matter how high the cost don’t stop practicing your faith.

-We read and know the story...

-Whoever doesn’t “toe the line” will be thrown into the den of lions!

-Daniel knew the stakes were high – v. 10 – “When Daniel knew the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in the upper chamber 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.”

-There a beautiful and power message in these words –

-The reason he looks to Jerusalem to pray is because of 1 Kings 8:35, 36 –

-Daniel prayed –

-Regularly – three times every day – Psalm 55:17

-Consistently – this was his practice

-Faithfully – he gave thanks!

3 – Leave outcomes in God's hands

- Try as the king may there was nothing that could be done.
- Daniel comes out of the den unharmed –
 - With Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, there was the fellowship of the 4th man.
 - Now with Daniel it is the fellowship of the second man or the “angel of the LORD”
 - Could it be the same One?
 - There are times in these past 75 years that God has seemed small and defeated –
 - But we read Daniel and find out that –
 - Time after time God delivered and promoted his people!
 - Time after time the ways of the pagans fail and are proven inferior!
 - And time after time you have pagan kings crying out to the God of Israel!

4 – Stand in awe of – and take joy in – the glory of God!

Application

Chapter 6, like chapter 3, is a very clear example of religious persecution –

- I see an interesting parallel between Daniel's two stories and the First Amendment to the US Constitution –
 - As you know, the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution are referred to as the “Bill of Rights”
 - But neither the Constitution nor the Bill of Rights actually give an individual rights – God is the giver of rights.
 - Take, for example, the First Amendment (which is first in order and priority!) –
 - The first part is called the “establishment clause” because it says “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.”
 - So the government can't establish a religion, then use its power to make you practice it –
 - The second clause is known as the “free exercise clause” because it says “or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” –
 - The State cannot use its authority to make you believe, live or worship contrary to your sincerely held beliefs.
- Think about the two examples of religious persecution in Daniel –
 - The first, in chapter 3, you have the State (King Nebuchadnezzar) establishing a religion and making everyone bow down under penalty of death! That is a violation of the establishment clause!
 - The second story, Daniel 6, is a violation of the free exercise clause because it restricts the individual's right to exercise their faith – In Daniel's case it was his freedom to pray to his God.
- Now, I am not making the case that the framers of the US Constitutions had the book of Daniel open in front of them as they deliberated (although I don't doubt there were some open Bibles as they deliberated!)
 - But what we see reflected in both the Constitution and these two stories in the Book of Daniel is the priority God puts on the free expression of faith! The freedom of religion is given by God and is important to God!
- God wants His creation to worship Him – and He should!
 - Worshipping the Creator is what is best for the creation!
 - But God seeks true worship –
- Daniel and the Lion's Den along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the Fiery Furnace, teach us something very important about how God views the freedom of religion and the restriction thereof!

1 – Respect and appreciate God's desire for religious freedom

2 – If you suffer, suffer with the conscience of the free!