

### **Daniel 6:1–5 (ESV)**

**1** It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, 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. **4** 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.”

### **Daniel 6:10–11 (ESV)**

**10** 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. **11** Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God.

### **Daniel 6:20–23 (ESV)**

**20** As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?” **21** Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! **22** My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.” **23** Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

### **An excellent example of faithfulness**

We know that what the Bible is ultimately about is the story of a **gracious God** pursuing a **sinful people** for **their redemption** and for **His glory**.

So we need to be careful not to make the stories to be ultimately about humans.

With that in mind, I cannot help but spend a Sunday focusing on what God can do **to** a person and **in** a person and **with** a person.

Frankly, I find Daniel amazing. He is one of the best examples in scriptures of a life lived **in faithfulness to God**. While I am sure that he had **faults**, for some reason God did not see fit to have **any of them mentioned** in his story.

We are going to look this morning at an example of faithfulness worthy of following. Then next week we will consider the rest of the story, Lord willing. This is a story for all of us. But you young people, this is especially a story for you. We all wake up with a day ahead of us. The future is just **some idea**. What we wake up to is life here and now.

If you will live your life, **here and now**, like Daniel did, you will turn out to be a person of character **in the future**, like Daniel did. It is true for us older folks as well. We cannot undo wasted time in our lives. But we can recommit our lives on **this day** to devote ourselves to the **most faithful life** we can live today. And hopefully, if we reach Daniel's age we will have some of his qualities.

I want to say this again because I do not know how to make the point strong enough. **What we do today matters...** a lot. Not just adults but also young people. Because what we **choose today** largely determines **who will we be tomorrow**. If we choose to be wishy washy, we will grow to be wishy washy. If we are uncommitted to obedience in the hard things **today**, we will not obey in the hard things **tomorrow**. If we choose to do the right thing in obedience to God **today**, we are more likely to be the person who obeys Him **tomorrow**.

Daniel did not get where he was in this story overnight. When he was a teenager, he determined to trust God and to obey him. He was taken from his home and made to live away from his family. He could have easily just done what everyone else was doing. His mom and dad sure couldn't have stopped him. But he didn't. He had it in his heart to follow God no matter what, no matter who was watching. That is how he ended up being who he was for our story today.

Now Daniel was probably say, 16, when his story in Daniel starts. We really need to consider this. Daniel has been working for the good of the Babylonian civil government for at least 60 years by now. Imagine that. 60 years of pouring his life and energy and creativity and knowledge into making Babylon a better run country. Keep in mind, he was doing much of this from a higher level, an executive level. He was certainly a big shot for much of his life. But still. It was work, similar to our work.

Then, by the time Belshazzar comes to power it looks like Daniel was out of the limelight. He was either sidelined, or he could no longer stomach working for the likes of an unscrupulous person like Belshazzar. So he is in retirement.

But in our text this morning, Darius the Mede is appointed King. It is clear that Daniel comes out of retirement to work for this new company, this new empire. Often when a corporation buys another corporation, they look for those in the purchased corporation who know the lay of the land. They want someone who understands what is going on. But they hope it to be a person who does not have a whole lot of loyalty to the prior management. It has to be a person who is not going to undermine the new owner because they resent the takeover. It has to be a person who is objective and full of integrity. It has to be someone who will pour excellence into the efforts for the new employer.

Well, somehow Darius picked 120 leaders or administrators. And then he recognized that Daniel was highly qualified for upper management. He was chosen as one of the three to administrate the administrators.

Why do you think that would be? How do you think this new king would make that kind of choice? Do you think he would just draw names out of hat? Of course not.

The point I am trying to make is that Daniel was probably chosen because for 60 years he was getting up every morning and applying himself to excellence at his job. Along with being supernaturally gifted, he applied himself at becoming the most effective administrator that he could be.

Daniel 6:3 (ESV)

**. 3 Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps because**

He gave excellent power point presentations?

He flattered Darius?

He knew the right people?

He owned a 60 year “on the job” placard?

No, scripture tells us why Darius wanted to promote him. And it was probably the same reason he picked him to begin with.

**an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.**

This is the first point about Daniel that we do well to copy.

**1. Daniel had an excellent spirit, or a spirit of excellence.**

Do you think that just happened to him? Do you think he was zapped with that? I don't believe that. I believe what this describes is the person with exceptional performance. Always. Every day. Unrelenting.

When Daniel and the two other guys went about doing their jobs, **Daniel did his job better.** We are not told that Daniel was considered for a promotion because

of some discernable **mystic knowledge**. He was considered because he was an **exceptional person**, a person of excellence, he had a superior spirit.

You and I are becoming something by the choices we make every day. We are practicing what we will become. Daniel was practicing excellence. And by the time he was over 80, excellence had become a well engrained trait. When people gave Daniel work to do, they knew what kind of work it would be.

Today we will make mundane choices. And they will seem unimportant at the time. But they are more important than they seem. As we repeat behaviors we solidify them. We reinforce our behavior. **Practice makes permanent**. As Christians we are to do whatever our **hands find to do with all our hearts as unto the Lord**. God's will for our lives is to do the next task with excellence, as an act of worship. As we do that, we become a more excellent worker and a more excellent worshipper. And as we do things like that, 20 years from now we will find we have a **much better character** than we have now. We will have a **greater capacity** to handle **greater workloads** under **greater stress**. We will have an increased capacity to be useful. And usually that difference will be noticed by others. And if and when they do notice, we can give glory to God for the work He has done in our lives.

Do you feel like the work you have to do tomorrow is unimportant and insignificant? It is not. It is a stepping stone to developing the character that God wants you to have. Just ask Daniel.

We would do well this week to treat all of what we do thoughtfully. We would do well to ask, **if Jesus was asking me to do this for Him, how would I do it?** If Jesus **needed this thing done**, how would I do it? It would be interesting what we learn.

Then next, a second trait to emulate with Daniel is this:

We see it in verse 4

**but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.**

## **2. Daniel was blameless.**

Have you ever seen the hearings when potential Supreme Court justices are being considered. If there are any skeletons in the closet of any of these men or women, they are going to be exposed. In fact, ones that **do not even exist** are often exposed.

Well that is similar to the situation Daniel is in. His enemies were looking for any reason that would belittle Daniel's credibility for the job. And think about this

carefully. They looked and looked and looked. But they could not find **ANYTHING**.

Blamelessness is an attainable state of being in scripture. Perfection is not. Sinlessness is not. But blamelessness is.

**Psalm 15:1–2 (ESV)**

**1 O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? 2 He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart;**

There are lots of scriptures that call us to be **blameless**. In 1 Timothy 3:10 a person can be a deacon if they are tested first and **prove themselves blameless**. Blameless basically means a charge of a sinful lifestyle will not stick. They might be accused of it, but the charge cannot be proven.

Daniel was blameless.

Let us ask ourselves this morning. If our lives were to be scrutinized, if our family members and friends were to be questioned under oath, if our computer records were to be searched, would we be disqualified for Christian leadership?

Would we fare as well as Daniel did?

If we know that we **would not**, what changes can we make **today** so that no charges would stick **tomorrow**?

If we know that there would be no charges that would stick, praise God. That is a Daniel style of life.

Daniel's faithfulness was truly remarkable. He was who he said he was when **everyone** was looking and when **no one** was looking. And the truest revelation of **who we are** usually comes when **no one is looking**.

Wouldn't it be great to know that even if the best private investigator was hired to investigate us, we would be confident that there is **nothing to hide** because there is **nothing to find**?

That is the kind of life Daniel lived.

Also his work record was impeccable. There were no cut corners. There were no instances of him exploiting his workforce. There were no lies or misconduct. He accepted no bribes, which was common in that culture. There was no laziness where he allowed important work to be delayed. That is the kind of thing they would be looking for.

What a frustrating job it must be when you are looking for **dirt** on a **dirt-less** person.

OK the third trait we see is in verse 5

**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."**

### **3. Daniel's faith in God was lived out publicly**

Daniel must have had a solid reputation of being a devoted follower of God. He had the reputation that he would be loyal to God, no matter what. These enemies of Daniel had to know that Daniel could have simply chosen to worship God privately and he would be fine. But they were banking that he would not do such a thing, because he had never done that before. Daniel prayed in front of a window facing Jerusalem. Daniel was a kind of guy that was going to stand for God publicly, and they hoped for that to be his downfall.

What have **we** trained people to **expect from us**? Do they expect that we will stand up for Christ in any situation where Christ is being maligned? Do they expect us to stand strong to our convictions and our worship of God, no matter what it might cost us?

Daniel's enemies were banking on this with Daniel.

**10 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.**

There are a couple of points here.

### **4. Daniel maintained the attitude of being a stranger in a strange land**

The phrase "toward Jerusalem" tells us a lot. Daniel, even in his 80's, never lost sight of **his true identity**. He knew he was not **from** Babylon and his destination was not **Babylon**. He was only passing through. His window opened toward Jerusalem and he intentionally prayed in that direction. This wasn't just a coincidence. No doubt Daniel was obeying what he read in scripture. This was from Solomon's prayer when he dedicated the temple.

#### **1 Kings 8:46–50 (ESV)**

**46 "If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near, 47 yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly,' 48 if they repent with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, 49 then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain**

**their cause 50 and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you, and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them**

Daniel was always a Judean. That was always his identity. He did not want to be in Babylon, no matter what the perks. His heart was in his home. He was an Old Testament example of how we should still be living.

**Colossians 3:1–4 (ESV)**

**1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

Daniel was living like this. He always kept touch with his true identity. He was primarily a **Jew** from **Jerusalem**. He was never a **Babylonian** at heart. His primary identity was determined by his relationship with God.

#### **5. Daniel was committed to daily spiritual disciplines**

If ever there was a person who could say, I am simply **too busy to pray three times a day**, Daniel was the guy. Look how important his position was. Look at all the important positions he had held. Daniel's time was surely very important. But look what he makes time for. What we **make time for** is usually a very important indicator of where our **hearts are** at.

Daniel prays three times a day, not because suddenly there is a law against it and he is trying to make a point. No. He is just doing **what he always does**.

What do you think would change in our lives if we were to systematically **pray 3 times a day**? I do not intend to make this some kind of legalism. But how often do we pray? Is it enough? Do we keep current with God?

#### **6. Daniel was thankful**

He **prayed and gave thanks**

It is impossible to understand the Christian life properly and not have it break out in thanksgiving from time to time.

We see this in the writings of Paul

**Philippians 4:4–7 (ESV)**

**4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests**

**be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

We could spend another sermon just on the topic of thanksgiving. Because no one has **more reasons to give thanks** than someone who has been **saved by grace**.

And another point from verse 10

### **7. Daniel would not compromise his worship of God**

Now Daniel was a smart man. He instantly understood the implications of the king's decree. And I am sure he knew where it came from. He knew his enemies were behind it. But look what he does. Does he run to the king to complain about how unfair the whole thing is? Does he beg the king for his life? Does he choose to pray **in his closet** for a month. If he was in the **New Testament** he could have quoted Jesus and done that. But he does not.

Think about that. It was only 30 days. Have there ever been 30 days that a decree like this wouldn't **hurt you at all** because you wouldn't **have had** a prayer time in that period of time?

Daniel had lots of options he could have chosen here. But Daniel had zero compromise in his soul. He had no **bend** where it came to the worship of His God. So he prays on **this day** like he would pray on **any day**. As far as Daniel was concerned, nothing significant had changed.

Wow, what an example to follow. It is astounding what he did. He chose **no earthly alternatives** to alleviate his problem. He looked to **no earthly solutions**. He went directly to God and to God alone with his problem. He **knows** what will happen. Daniel was good at reading the **literal** writing on the wall. Surely he had no trouble reading the **figurative** writing on the wall. He knew where this was going.

**21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." 23 Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.**

The 6<sup>th</sup> trait we see here is this.

### **8. Daniel trusted in His God.**

It is interesting the contrast between the King's night and Daniel's night.



The Reformed Expository Commentary says this:

**What a stark contrast this provides! King Darius had at his disposal every pleasure that the ancient world had to offer, yet he could not enjoy any of them, while Daniel had nothing except the presence of his God with him in his trials and yet enjoyed a peaceful night's rest. This shows us that true peace does not come from the possessions that we accumulate but from the presence and favor of God in our lives. What was meant to be a terrifying and deadly trial for Daniel with the lions instead became a strengthening encounter with the angel. God was with him and preserved him safely through the ordeal.**

*Iain M. Duguid, Daniel, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Iain M. Duguid, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 100.*

The trust in God often does not change **life's circumstances**. But it drastically alters **our experience of them**.

We had talked earlier about Daniel's faith causing him to live a blameless life. Daniel knew that God did not need to use the lions den to teach him a lesson about how he was treating the king. Daniel was confident that he was not being thrown into the lions den for any of his own bad behavior. So if this lions den was not intended for God's purpose of **harming Daniel**, it would make sense that the mouths of the lions would be closed. I think that is why Daniel says this:

The lions did not harm me

**, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm."**

That is how faith thinks. This is not to say that God always delivers us out of these trials. Lots of people die every day for making a stand for Christ. But Daniel was saved because it served God's purposes to save him. He was living in trust in His God. And he knew that God was not punishing him.

I think we could pick any of these points to apply this week.

- 1. Daniel had an excellent spirit, or a spirit of excellence.**
- 2. Daniel was blameless.**
- 3. Daniel's faith in God was lived out publicly**
- 4. Daniel maintained the attitude of being a stranger in a strange land**
- 5. Daniel was committed to daily spiritual disciplines**
- 6. Daniel was thankful**
- 7. Daniel would not compromise his worship of God**
- 8. Daniel trusted in His God.**

What changes need made in our lives to look more like Daniel? Where are the weaknesses we should focus on this week to honor our Lord more?