

IN THE DEN OF LIONS

DANIEL 6:1-28

Early this year, Aaron and Melissa Klein, Christian owners of “[Sweet Cakes by Melissa](#)” - a bakery in Gresham, Oregon - were sued by a homosexual couple for not agreeing to bake them a wedding cake.

The controversy forced the Kleins to close up shop.

In June of this year, the State of Washington’s Attorney General brought legal action against “[Arlene’s Flowers And Gifts](#)” - a decades old florist - who refused to supply flowers for a same sex wedding.

Owner Barronelle Stutzman countersued. She said it was time to take a stand for what she believes.

Just last month the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled that photographer, Elaine Huguenin, was guilty of violating the state’s Human Rights Act by refusing to serve as the photographer at a same sex ceremony.

In all three cases the refusal was the result of deeply held Christian convictions on the part of the providers.

In the past, Americans with religious persuasions were protected against unlawful discrimination. Laws existed that respected a person’s religious convictions, *yet today those laws are being turned topsy-turvy.*

San Antonio, TX just passed an ordinance that will make it illegal for you to *work for* or *do business in* the city - if you oppose same-sex marriage, speak against homosexuality, or even attend a church that does.

In this country we've forgotten that freedom isn't just a tolerance for behaviors that push against traditional boundaries... Freedom also allows people of conscience, *with biblical convictions about right and wrong*, to live out those beliefs in a meaningful way.

Anti-discrimination laws put on the books to protect people of faith are being used today for the exact opposite purpose - *to punish religious convictions!*

Sadly, today, it's illegal to discriminate against anyone because of their religious beliefs, unless those religious beliefs are biblically-orthodox Christianity.

And it's not just the Bible's view on homosexuality that rankles the ire of the culture. A Christian insists on absolutes. We believe that God has spoken. Morality isn't up for discussion, and dialogue, and compromise.

There is a right and there is a wrong... There is a truth and false... We don't all get to vote on what's true.

We even believe that not all religions are qualitatively the same. For the last two millenniums Christians have unapologetically declared that Jesus alone can get a person to heaven. All other religions send you to hell.

But today this gets branded as "[hate speech](#)." In fact it's the curious habit of today's pluralism to label anything that contradicts it's own beliefs as *hateful*.

Can't we disagree without it being called "*hate?*" I have pals with whom I agree to disagree, and we'll still be friends. Why are Christians always labeled "*haters?*"

It seems to me, it's a loving act to go out of your way to tell someone who's lost, how they can be found!

Today's religious tolerance includes the beliefs of everything and everyone, except those of Christianity.

Even Islam gets a pass. *Don't you realize Islam makes claims of exclusivity?* Do you really assume the Ayatollah respects other beliefs and wants to co-exist with other religions? In every Islamic country today, Christians are encouraged to convert to Islam, but it is against the law for a Muslim to convert to Christianity.

Yet our media, and government, and even our President constantly portrays Islam in a favorable light.

Christianity has become the "*picked on*" religion.

Yet that's what you can expect when a *biblical faith* is relegated to **minority status**. Laws on the books, put there for other reasons, get used against believers.

This is exactly what happens in Daniel 6...

The chapter begins, "**It pleased Darius** (the new Persian ruler of the city of Babylon) **to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss.**"

A "*satrap*" was a regional, provincial leader. They reported to three governors - one of which was Daniel.

To understand Daniel's place in the world think of Henry Kissinger, or James Baker, or Madeline Albright, or Warren Christopher, or Colin Powell. These people were politicians, but not the kind that kiss babies, and work the crowd, and run for office. These folks were more statesmen - bureaucrats - professionals who fill an administrative post in someone else's government.

And this was Daniel. He was a professional diplomat. His career transcended multiple administrations.

He even managed to secure employment in a new empire. When Persia conquered Babylon, the Persian King Darius appointed Daniel to a seat in his cabinet.

Daniel came to Babylon a Jewish POW, yet he rose to become one of the most powerful figures of his day.

Daniel lived an *amazing life*. He would've made a great subject for one of A&E's "Biography" specials.

And the distinguishing accomplishment of Daniel's life was he remained *a man of faith* even in a *faithless environment*. He was *a godly man* in an *ungodly land*.

Were his convictions tested? Time and time again!

Did he draw fire from his enemies? Over and over.

And did he prevail? By a courageous faith and by the grace of God he continued to climb in prominence.

The darker a society grows the more of a backdrop it becomes for people of faith to shine their light brightly.

Today, the Church needs modern Daniels who'll invade the secular space without compromising their convictions, or becoming tainted by the evil in the culture. *We need believers unafraid of the lion's den.*

Verse 3, “Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.” The new rulers had just moved in, *yet they admired a quality in Daniel.*

He had an “*excellent spirit.*” They could tell he was a man of substance. Daniel had a power under the hood.

And Daniel was not a young buck. He's an old guy.

In chapter 6 Daniel is in his late 80s, and he's still going strong. He's even up for another promotion.

It reminds me of the lady who turned 100. She was asked, “*Do you have any kids?*” She replied, “*Not yet.*”

Age is always relative. Someone said, “*Age is mind over matter. If you don't mind - then it don't matter.*”

Verse 4, “So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.” Daniel had an impeccable record.

There was nothing about the way Daniel conducted himself on the job, or at home, or on business trips that raised the slightest suspicion of any impropriety...

No girlfriends on the side... No secret sexting... No campaign finance irregularities... No political paybacks... No, insider trading... No IRS scandals...

*Daniel even paid social security tax on his domestic workers... **He was blameless!***
Oh, that our enemies had the same trouble finding a chink in our armor!

Seriously, what if a private eye spent the next 30 days turning your life upside down... *he scoured your on-line accounts - scanned your hard-drives - bugged your conversations - wiretapped your phone - put a surveillance camera on you - what dirt would he find?*

What they said about Daniel is truly amazing...

Verse 5, *“Then these men said, “We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God.”* The only way they can accuse Daniel is to force him to choose between obedience to God and the king. Daniel will choose God, and they can trump up some disloyalty to Darius.

They can't fault Daniel, but they can fool Darius. Behind closed doors they hatch a plot to kill Daniel.

“So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: “King Darius, live forever!

All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.” These men were envious of Daniel's ability and

success. I've heard it put, "Jealousy is the tribute that mediocracy pays to excellence."

That was the case with these fellows who were under Daniel's authority. Even though Daniel is nearly 90 years old these young guns can't wait for him to die off. He's a political impediment to their promotion.

Notice, the first thing their scheme involved was **fanfare**, they "*thronged... the king... King Darius, life forever!*" They mobbed him, and discombobulated him.

Second, they used **falsehood**. They said, "*All the governors and satraps... consulted together...*" They say "*all,*" but not so. Daniel was one of three governors who ruled the land, but I'll bet he was never consulted.

And then they employed **flattery**. "*Whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.*" The king deserved a special place in *the pantheon of political importance*. For 30 days prayers to anyone but Darius were illegal.

And I'm sure they just so happened to have a pen and sheepskin handy. In verse 8 they insist, "*Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.*"

Under Babylonian law the king was supreme. He was considered divine so he could do as he pleased, even contradict himself from one day to the next.

Whereas, the Persian kings spoke for the gods. He was their representative, so once he made a decree - the law stood. The gods didn't change their minds.

Thus, if Darius signs this law there's no going back. It's a done deal. Which makes verse 9 so ominous, "*Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.*"

And what a horrible law this was...

Darius had given zero thought to its implications...

Imagine, sick folks who had to suffer 30 days before they could pray for healing...
Farmers waiting 30 days to pray for rain... School kids taking tests for 30 days
without any prayer - *grades severely suffered!...*

What if your team was headed to the playoffs, and you couldn't pray... This was a
stupid decision on a lot of fronts, but most significantly is what comes next...

Verse 10 tracks Daniel's reaction, "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was
signed, he went home."

Daniel didn't run to plead with the king...

Or go to the courthouse to file an injunction...

Or contact his constituency to sign a petition...

Or bombard the palace switchboard with callers...

Once Daniel knew this was no rumor - that King Darius had actually put his
signature on the legislation.

Daniel "*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.*" Daniel didn't rattle, or
fret, or panic - he prayed!

Daniel just does what he's always done.

Over the years Daniel had developed a pattern, a discipline of holiness. Every day he prayed three times.

Like the Dr. Pepper slogan, “10, 2, and 4.”

Jewish custom called for prayer at sunrise, and at noon, and then at sunset. This is why David wrote in Psalm 55:17, “Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice.”

We all should take note of Daniel’s *habitual holiness*.

First, he had a **place to pray**. He went to his “*upper room*.” Maybe it was quieter there - above the street noise. But Daniel had a specific location designated.

Second, he had regular times or **periods for prayer**. His prayer life was recurrent. He had this regular appointment with God that he almost never ever broke.

Third, Daniel had a **posture for prayer**. He knelt.

Nowhere does the Bible say you have to kneel or close your eyes to pray. These are mere customs.

In fact, the Bible gives us examples of folks praying in all sorts of postures - standing, lying prostrate on their face, raising their hands to the Lord. But for Daniel *bending his knee* helped him *humble his heart*.

I heard a great poem on prayer, “The proper way for a man to pray, says Deacon Lemuel Keys - and the only proper attitude is down upon his knees.

No, I should say the way to pray, says Reverend Doctor Wise - Is standing straight with outstretched arms, and rapt, and upturned eyes.

Oh, no, no, no, said Elmer Slow - such posture is too proud. A man should pray with eyes fast closed, and his head contritely bowed.

It seems to me his hands should be, austerely clasped in front. Both hands pointing toward the ground, said Reverend Doctor Blunt.

'Last year I fell in Hitchins' well, head first,' said Cyrus Brown - 'And both my heels were sticking up, and my head was pointing down. And I made a prayer right then and there, the best I ever said. The prayin'est prayer I ever prayed, was standing on my head!'"

It doesn't really matter what posture you adopt, as long as you pray! Experiment with the **posture**, the **place**, the **period** of the day - *whatever helps you pray*.

And fourth, Daniel's prayer was **pointed** - *toward Jerusalem, and the site of the Temple*. In the OT God's presence rested in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem.

That's why God told its builder, King Solomon, that later when Israel rebels and is displaced from their land, they should pray and repent toward Jerusalem.

In a sense all prayer traveled through Jerusalem.

Even today Jews can log onto the internet and come to the Temple, or its Western Wall, via webcam. Rather than *stray pray* - just pray without any direction - Jews believe their prayers have a better opportunity to be answered if they pray pointed toward the Temple site.

As Christians, we also believe our prayers should be pointed or aimed - not toward a Temple or a physical location, but prayed in and through the name of Jesus!

Today, all heard prayers travel through Jesus.

And fifth, notice Daniel had a **purpose** for his prayer.

He “**gave thanks before His God.**” Even though he’s sealing his death sentence with these prayers it’s still his duty as a child of God to give His Father thanks!

So here are five keys to a healthy prayer life...

Find a **place** to pray, and a **period** of the day to pray.

Have a prayer **posture** in mind... Make sure you **point** your prayers in the right direction, toward Jesus. And the **purpose** of prayer is to praise Him regardless.

Yet even though Daniel had a regular devotional life, I’d imagine under the circumstances he was tempted to alter his habits a bit... make a few minor modifications.

Daniel could’ve rationalized, *“God can hear me with my windows shut. They don’t really have to be open.”*

Or *“Why pray in the day? Why not at 1:00, 3:00, and 5:00 in the morning. It’s quieter - less distractions.”*

Or *“Instead of in the window, I’ll lie under the bed.”*

It’s amazing how our devotion to God often hinges on the smallest stuff. Little things, we’re tempted to brush off as if they don’t matter - actually do! A peek at this, or a nibble at that - *what’s the big deal?* But it is!

Just because you can excuse it away, doesn’t mean you don’t know in your heart it’s a compromise - it’s an act of cowardice - it’s a sin... Daniel knew where to draw the line between *faithfulness* and *foolishness*...

I really admire the balance of Daniel's approach. He didn't invite persecution, but neither did he run from it.

Daniel was in the minority, but that didn't mean he desired to be a martyr. We learned in Chapter 1, that over many decades, God enabled Daniel to navigate his survival in a pagan land. Daniel wasn't foolish...

Here he doesn't organize a prayer vigil at the palace to protest the king's tyranny... *But neither does he cower from the public eye and hide what he's doing...*

Daniel maintained his normal devotion, and refused to let **the fear of man alter his approach to God**. And this is the soul-searching question for us, **“Do we ever let the fear of man alter our approach to God?”** If so, we're guilty of compromise - we've denied our Lord.

Verse 11, **“Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.”** They had a stake-out in front of Daniel's condo.

“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?” I'm sure the king is thinking... *you guys have amnesia*. You were just here flattering me!

“The king answered and said, “The thing *is* true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.” So they answered and said before the king, “That Daniel...” And I'm sure instantly, the king realized he'd been snookered - bamboozled. This wasn't about his praise - but their hatred for Daniel.

They say, **“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. And the king, when he heard *these* words, was greatly displeased with himself...

Not with Daniel, but with "*himself*." Darius knew the impossible situation he had created for his friend.

"And (he) set *his* heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him." For the rest of day, Darius dropped all his official business, and his sole pursuit was to find a loophole that would enable him to save Daniel from the lions.

Verse 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."

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.*" I'm sure part of Darius' confidence that God would deliver Daniel is in the fact that Daniel served God "*continually*." What a testimony!

Day in, day out - it was an uninterrupted faithfulness.

Realize a lion's den is a rare trial in any age. Folks aren't often tossed to hungry lions. But Daniel prepared for the lion's den by a daily consistency in his life.

G Campbell Morgan writes, "*The occasional is always affected by the habitual.*" It's our daily, ordinary faithfulness that prepares us for the extraordinary trial.

Verse 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.”

Darius did his duty, but this wasn't his desire.

“Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him.” He tossed and turned.

They say, “The softest pillow is a clear conscience.” If so, then Darius spent the night on a bed of nails.

“Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

Did Daniel paused a second or two for effect - *make the king sweat?* His rash decree certainly deserved it.

“Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever!”

In Daniel's reply, you sense a cheerfulness. The king in the palace had spent the night in turmoil, while Daniel was at peace with the lions. You'd expect a role reversal - Darius at peace, and Daniel restless. But Daniel rested *in the den*, as Darius worried *in his sin*.

The most peaceful place on Earth is the center of God's will, even if it places you in a den of man-eaters.

Actually, Daniel would **rest in peace** either way - in the mouths of Darius' lions, or in the arms of His God.

Shakespeare put it, “**Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant taste of death but once.**”

Daniel explains how God did it in verse 22, “My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.” Daniel made it clear an angel struck the lions with lockjaw. God intervened spiritually and supernaturally.

It reminds me of the little girl who heard the story of Daniel in the lions’ den in Sunday School. Her teacher asked the class how Daniel could’ve been so brave?

She replied, “Daniel wasn’t afraid because he knew one of the lions was the Lion of the tribe of Judah!”

It could be that this “angel” or “messenger” was the pre-incarnate Christ. Daniel 3 said that One like the Son of God showed up in the fiery furnace - *why not in the lion’s den?* Christ Himself may’ve helped Daniel.

And that would be an encouragement for us. 1 Peter 5:8 describes Satan as “a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.” The devil sets tricks and traps for us.

At times every Christian spends a night or two in the lions’ den. But there we taste the power of the Lion of Judah. What better place to learn the Lord’s promise to you and me, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

It’s interesting, in verse 22 Daniel says an angel “*shut the lions’ mouths*” - but what stopped the lions from mauling him with their paws, and eating him later?

We really don’t know... I wouldn’t want to diminish Daniel’s explanation in any way, but I wonder if the lions steered clear of Daniel for another reason also...

As some of you know I'm not real fond of dogs. I didn't grow up around them. Dogs make me uneasy.

Which is why whenever I walk into a yard with a big dog, it immediately seeks me out - sniffs me - thinks about eating me. It can sense my fear and uneasiness.

But could Daniel's courageous faith have had the opposite effect on the lions? He was so confident in God - so bold and brave - *the lions were afraid of him!*

Daniel knew His plight would be determined by **the hand of God**, not by **the claws and jaws of the lions**.

Charles Spurgeon use to say, **"It's a good thing those lions didn't eat old Daniel. They would've choked on him. Daniel was half grit and half backbone."** Perhaps God was actually looking out for the lions. They might've broken their teeth on the tough faith of Daniel.

A Christian minority needs this kind of tough faith.

This past spring Jason Collins became the first NBA player to come out of the closet and reveal his homosexuality. The mainstream media went out of their way to applaud Collins for his decision and lifestyle...

Everyone except ESPN reporter, Chris Broussard...

In an episode of **"Outside The Lines,"** Broussard, a Christian, commented on Collins' homosexuality...

"If you're openly living that type of lifestyle, then the Bible says... that's a sin. And if you're openly living in unrepentant sin, whatever it may be - not just homosexuality - adultery, fornication, premarital sex between heterosexuals, whatever it may be - I believe that's walking in open rebellion to God, and to Jesus Christ. So, I would not

characterize that person as a Christian, 'cause I don't think the Bible would characterize him as a Christian." Chris Broussard said nothing Christians haven't been saying for thousands of years. *Yet suddenly he found himself in the lion's den!* Calls were made for Broussard's immediate firing.

One editorial noted, "In the current culture, it takes more courage for someone like Chris Broussard to *speak out* than it does for Jason Collins to *come out*."

Today, the roles have been reversed. Christians are hiding in the closet, afraid of persecution for simply being who they are, and believing what they do.

Joe Carter of the Christian Coalition says, "opposing homosexuality can cause (people) to lose their jobs, and haunt them forever. It's easier to just go along... "

Listen again, "*It's easier to just go along.*"

And that's not just true of standing up for the biblical view of gender and sexuality - it's true for all kinds of potential compromises. Real faith can't just "*go along.*"

Like Daniel, faith is often called on to make a stand for God, even if that puts us in the mouths of the lions.

Scottish preacher Alexander Maclaren once said, "Unless you are prepared to be in the minority, and now and then be called 'narrow,' 'fanatic,' and to be laughed at by men because you will not do what they do, but abstain and resist, then there is little chance of your ever making much of your Christian profession."

Daniel was one man of faith in a sea of paganism, but he **stood out** because he **stood up** for the truth.

Verse 23, “Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God. And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions - them, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.” Apparently, there had been nothing wrong with the lions or their appetite.

“Then King Darius wrote (a royal edict): To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom *men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.*” For years Darius lived in darkness, but now the light is dawning.

He’s begun to fear the Lord! Proverbs 9:10 tells us, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”

There is a movement in today’s Church that shies away from harder truths - and from taking unpopular stands. It’s proponents go out of their way to keep from offending unbelievers, and drive them from Christianity.

But what about offending God?

Author David Wells writes, “The born-again, marketing church has calculated that unless it makes deep, serious cultural adaptations, it will go out of business, especially with the younger generations.

What it has not considered carefully enough is that it may well be putting itself out of business with God.”

I'd rather be with God in the lions' den than apart from Him in the palace. The greatest fear facing Daniel was not being thrown to the lions, but refusing to stand up for God. Daniel feared His God, more than the lions.

And now Darius does too. He writes, "For He *is* the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom *is the one* which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion *shall endure to the end*." It's God's Kingdom, not that of the Medes and Persians, that will endure eternally.

Darius concludes, "He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

The chapter ends, "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

Men and Women with committed faith *can prosper like Daniel*, even in heathen surroundings - not by backing down - but by standing up, and showing a backbone, and trusting God even in the den of lions.

I want to close by quoting a Presbyterian pastor named, Katsuki Hirano. Pastor Katsuki lives in Japan.

Fewer than 1% of his countrymen are Christians.

The pastor explains, "The smallness of the church in Japan doesn't matter for us. Our responsibility is to preach the Word of God faithfully. After that, God will do something, although we cannot predict what."

Katsuki continues, "I think the lesson for American churches and pastors is, '*Don't be afraid to become a minority.*' God's Word is still living among us in Japan."

In the years to come, a Christian Minority may no longer have a majority of the votes in the ballot box...

We may no longer get preferential treatment from legislatures and elected officials... We may no longer be respected by the society at large for the good that we do... Our persuasion may not be the culture's dominate philosophy... The traditions and the Christian underpinnings of our culture may be forgotten... We may get maligned and misrepresented, *but no matter...*

I won't be the least bit discouraged. The Gospel needs none of the above to survive and even thrive

Christianity has prospered in far worse conditions.

Jesus equips every generation of Christians with His infallible Word, and precious promises, and sovereign Spirit. Ultimately, the Church of Jesus will prevail!

But the one wave that will sink our ship now is *fear!*

Don't allow yourself to be frightened or bullied.

Daniel didn't go out looking for a fight, but when it came to him, he was brave, had faith, and was faithful. **"Daniel was a stand up person in a bow down world."**

Let's dare to be a Daniel. Take a stand when it's your turn... *and God will be with you even in the lion's den.*