

VIDEO #4: DAN THE MAN (OF GOD) (Daniel 6)

I have always had an affection for the OT prophet Daniel - and not just because we share the same name. I have always admired his relentless determination to reflect God no matter what his circumstances. That's pretty impressive stuff considering he was removed from his hometown by force - thank you, King Nebuchadnezzar - and then made to march from Jerusalem to Babylon, a journey of about 500 miles (think being made to walk from Redwood Falls to Chicago), likely at somebody's pace not his, and all this happening most likely during Daniel's teenage years. Yet, right from the beginning of what seemed to be an absolutely horrible situation, Daniel determined that he would belong to God - no matter what. And he would show himself to be a man of God throughout his life - including a moment that, all these centuries later, continues to speak to us.

The Bible tells us that the Babylonian kingdom which Daniel had loyally served throughout his life was eventually overthrown by the forces of the Medes and Persians. But Daniel was retained in his administrative post by the new regime. In fact, Daniel was clearly so very good at his duties that the king thought about making Daniel the overseer of his whole empire - the whole entire massive thing - making him second in authority only to the king himself.

Problem: Daniel's colleagues, his co-workers, so to speak, thought this entirely unfair. After all, they were skilled too; they were smart too. What did Daniel have that they didn't have? And besides, Daniel was still considered to be a foreigner by these guys, and therefore of much less worth than they. They decided to hatch a plot, with the goal of finding something in Daniel that could prove destructive to his career.

But they ran into an unexpected problem: Daniel was not only a man of brains and skills but also of integrity. According to the Bible, these guys *tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent - Daniel 6:4.* What an amazing testimony! How many of us, if somebody was bound and determined to "dig up some dirt," could escape that kind of scrutiny? These guys are TRYING to find something that Daniel was doing wrong - but they couldn't.

So, they had to go back to the drawing board and figure out a "Plan B." Now as they kept on watching him, they began to notice that Daniel prayed - three times a day, every day. He was completely faithful to this part of his daily routine. So, they decided that maybe, just maybe, his devotion to his God could be his undoing. They persuaded the king to try something out as kind of a test of loyalty to his rule, so they got an audience with the king and presented their plan: *"[Your Majesty, all of us, your most loyal government servants] have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered - in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed" - Daniel 6:7-8.* The king, no doubt flattered by all this, signed it into law - a law that could not be revoked.

So, what was Daniel's response to this? The story continues: *Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before -*

Daniel 6:10. Did you hear that? He knew that this new decree was now the law of the land, and it was a published fact what the consequence was for disobedience - he'd be the main course on a lion menu, but it didn't change a thing as far as he was concerned; that was earthly kingdom stuff, and he was far more interested in God-kingdom stuff. So, he continued his faithful life of prayer and devotion to a God who he knew had been more than faithful to him, just like he always had. But this was exactly what his enemies had been waiting for. As the Bible says: ***Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help - Daniel 6:11.***

Immediately they ran back to the king and informed him of Daniel's breaking the new law and, just in case the king might have forgotten, the consequences for breaking that law - the den of lions. Just as immediately, the king regretted what he had done but he could find no way out of having to turn Daniel over to the authorities. So, Daniel was arrested and thrown into the lions' den.

Now, following a sleepless night, at dawn's first light, the king leaped from his bed and ran to the lions' den and called out in an anxious voice: ***"Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" - King Darius, Daniel 6:20b.*** And almost immediately, he heard a familiar voice answering him, filling him with joy and comfort: ***"May the king live forever! My God sent His angel, and He shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in His sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty" - Daniel 6:21-22.*** And sure enough, so complete was God's care of His faithful servant that, as the Bible reports: ***[W]hen Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God - Daniel 6:23b.*** Unfortunately, the same could not be said for those who had plotted against him; the Bible tells us: ***At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones - Daniel 6:24.***

Now what was Daniel's secret? It wasn't his brains or his skills. It wasn't even his integrity, as praiseworthy as that was. It was his faith in the God into whose hands he had placed his life. And God rewarded Daniel's faithfulness to Him by saving him from the plans of those who wished to do him harm. Daniel knew the outcome of praying to God - no, not the lions' den, but rather God's taking care of him as he always had. What's really cool about all this is that Daniel didn't presume on God as to what might happen to him. After all, he still might have wound up in that lions' den. But Daniel knew something even more important - that God was always completely worthy of his prayers, his faith, and his very life - no matter the human, earthly result.

Many times, we view the world by our judgments, by our perspectives. We sometimes even go so far as to presume what God would do because, after all, "that's what I'd do." Folks, our God is so much bigger than our viewpoints and perspectives. His plans are perfect because His viewpoint is perfect. His outcomes are perfect. If we could learn, regardless of what we see, to rest in what He sees, we'd have fewer gray hairs and acid indigestion, and far more smiles. God is always faithful - but that's based on His point of view, not ours. Our response to Him is not to judge or assess results that we see. Our response is to trust in the outcome God sees. You want a life of peace and joy? Learn to rest in God's outcomes. That's what Daniel did, and I bet he's still smiling. I love you guys! Have a great day - God bless!