

GODLY LIVING IN A GODLESS WORLD

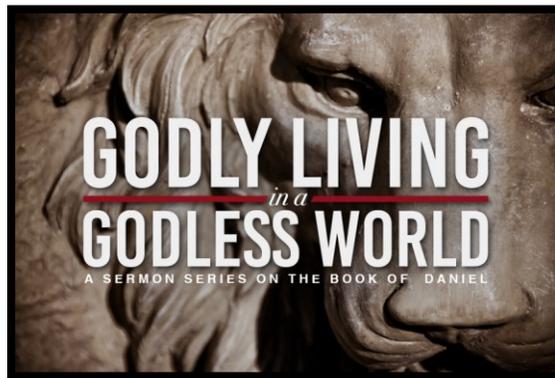
Expositional Study Of Daniel

Daniel 6:1-16

Written By

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June 26, 2016



As cultures implode, they explode all over people who love and worship the living, trinitarian God. Why? They covertly and overtly attack Christians because their words and witness stand as a check against the non-believers desire to live a life with no moral restraints, or to at least live with moral restraints of their carnal creation. They attack because truth is a killjoy for false ideologies, philosophies, and socialistic methods of governance. They attack because they ultimately do not want any accountability for what they do, be it personal life choices or public forms of governance. They attack because they love the darkness and hate the light, as Jesus clearly articulated when He walked among us,

¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God (John 3).

Jesus could not have been clearer. His life certainly illustrated the truth of these words, didn't it? From the day His sandals hit the dirt to share His gospel message, the majority of the world banded together against Him to silence Him any way they could. Whether it involved people from a small town who were angry he had cut into their profit margin by killing a herd of pigs who committed suicide after an exorcism of nasty demonic beings (Matthew 8:28-33), or

religious educated Pharisees who could not stand the fact He, of all people, a carpenter from Galilee, would dare to subvert their religious traditions with His teaching (Matthew 12:1-7), the line stretched into infinity of people who opposed Him.

In all of these skirmishes Jesus did not spiritually fold. No. He flexed His faith in a clear, courageous fashion, and by so doing He stands as an eternal flesh and blood model to each of us who claim His mighty name. All of this logically leads to a pivotal life question for the dark, dangerous day in which we live, which is much like His:

Will You Fold or Flex Your Faith In The Fray? (Daniel 6:1-16)

Some six hundred years prior to Christ's ministry, Daniel's life of faith answered this query on more than one occasion. Whether he was a teenager tempted to compromise his faith by eating food forbidden by Mosaic Law (Daniel 1), or an eighty-plus year old man brought out of retirement to confront a wicked king on the last night of the Babylonian Empire, this man never wavered in his commitment to God and God's eternal, life-giving Word. What happens after his courageous encounter with King Belshazzar and the Medo-Persian invasion of Babylon is a continued case study in how to live in a godless, wicked world.

Four concepts arise from a structural analysis of this pericope (passage) which guide you in answering the question at hand. As you live and move in a wayward world, how should you live when the world gets testy?

Do Act Like A Christian (Daniel 6:1-3)

It's unfortunate I have to say this, but it's most necessary because when being a Christian is not in vogue in a country, when said country finds Christ and Christians offensive and part of the national problem(s), it's quite natural to blend into the background so the going is easier. This is not what Daniel did, ever. He didn't blend in he stood out, always. Read on and you'll see what I mean:

¹ It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom . . .

Put it in park right here for a moment.

Who is Darius? That is the big contextual, historical question and one we must answer before we proceed any further. Yes, thinking minds want to know, "Who is this ruler?" Here's some background.

Every historical account about the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. credits Cyrus II, the Great, with the stunning, blitzkrieg military victory over a superior foe. Further, you cannot find one extra-biblical reference to anyone called "Darius the Mede" (Daniel 5:31; 6:1-28; 11:1). Liberal theologians, then, do what they do best: they deny the man was a real historical figure. Those, like us, who accept the historicity of the book, posit four primary ways to identify this conquering king.

One, some, like Old Testament scholar Charles Boutflower, identify Darius as Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. Two, others, assert he was none other than Gubaru/Ugbaru (or the Greek Gobryas), a general under Cyrus, which the Nabonidus Chronicles names as the leader of the Babylonian victory. Three, some, like John Witcomb, posit that Darius was Ugbaru actually

captured the city and that Gubaru actually became the governor with great power from a decree by Cyrus. Four, some believe the evidence points to Cyrus as the man behind this name.

I opt for the fourth viewpoint based on the following evidence. One, it is well-known that Cyrus ancestrally was both Mede (through his mother, Mandane, who was also the daughter of the Median king, Astyages and granddaughter of Cyaxeres the Great) and Persian (through his father, Cambyses I). By calling him “Darius the Mede,” as well as Cyrus, Daniel revealed how this one man led the prophesied Medo-Persian empire (Daniel 2:39). Two, Herodotus, in his *Histories* (425 A.D.), also states that Cyrus’ Median mother didn’t give him the name Cyrus at his birth, leading us to believe it was, you guessed it, Darius. Three, whereas some take the textual statements that he “received the kingdom (5:31) and “was made ruler” (9:1) to denote that Cyrus, the King, must have made someone else, like Gubaru and/or Ugbaru the governor, one can easily and logically remark that these clauses could be referencing God giving Cyrus/Darius the new kingdom.

With Babylon firmly under his authority Darius/Cyrus wasted no time in creating a highly organized governing body in order to rule effectively while also creating a peaceful environment:

² and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. ³ Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

Darius would have loved living in D.C. He understood the importance of having organizational charts and clear lines of authority. He understood that without these there would be power usurpation and power grabs with little or no accountability. He understood the need for great leaders to lead the new governmental structure. That’s why he hand-picked, of all people, Daniel.

Who picks an 80-plus year old man to serve in the upper echelons of a demanding governmental environment? By eighty, a lot of things start to go, like hearing (could you repeat that?), eyesight (come close ‘cause I can’t see you), taste buds (why is food so bland?), memory (where’s my camel?), flexibility (I can’t pick that up off the floor in one move. That will take three moves), and so on. At eighty when you finally get down on the ground to pick up something, you realize it will take a lot of effort to get back up so you just decide to stay down there awhile. Daniel, on the contrary, must have been in GREAT shape because he took care of himself. He shows you how you can be a marketable economy even as an octogenarian, and he also shows our throwaway culture that some of our greatest leaders are potentially the folks we think are ready for the proverbial old folks home. They are the Christian people with life wisdom and common sense. They are the folks who’ve walked a long time with God and know what He wants, what to avoid, what to embrace, and what constitutes a good versus a bad decision.

I find Darius’ selection of Daniel most enlightening and instructive. Daniel came out of retirement and immediately distinguished himself from all the other political appointees. Not that he made this his life goal either for he operated, unlike many of our politicians, on humility and meekness. It just happened *naturally*. His “extraordinary spirit” references his God-given ability to out-think everyone else in the room, coupled with his proven godly, humble character.

Darius, no doubt, heard that King Belshazzar had also just made this old man third ruler in the nation the night the nation fell, so this selection spoke volumes as he looked for new officials to lead. He didn't care how old they were, just that they were good, trustworthy men with sound, proven ability. Daniel fit that job description to a tee. And the more Darius watched this senior citizen in action, the more he was convinced he should be one of the three main leaders of the new governmental structure. Note, this was not the first time Daniel's God-honoring work ethic, God-given wisdom and insight, and God-given leadership ability had propelled him to the head of the leadership class (Daniel 2:46-49).

In godless times realize the utter importance of living a godly life wherever God places you and regardless of your age. As Paul says later, "*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Whether you are in a windowless room deep in the Pentagon, working behind a bank counter, giving leadership to a team of engineers, or flying a jet fighter over Afghanistan, your work should be qualitatively different from those around you because you are working *as if for God*. A work ethic of this nature cannot but cause you to achieve advancement because you will stand out. Also, as Daniel did not hide his faith where God had him employed, you should not either. From the beginning of his captivity to the end of his life, his character reflected the character of God. Let Daniel be your model and let Paul's words to the Ephesian believers be your mandate:

¹⁷ This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. ²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (Ephesians 4).

Jesus calls His saints, as He called Daniel, to live markedly different lives in their respective cultural environments. Do you? Will you? Can non-believers see and sense there is something different about you in the way you work, how you talk, how you lead, and how you follow leaders, regardless of whether they are easy or hard to follow? Never short-change the apologetic value of a life well-lived for the Savior.

What happens when you chose to stand out for God? His face will smile upon you, for sure; however, your Adversary will not be too pleased. Don't fear him. Just anticipate him.

Do Anticipate Covert Activity

Jealousy is a metastasizing monster, isn't it? Just let someone else get a promotion over you, or win a prize, or land a great job, or, well, you can fill in the blank, and jealousy can seize your heart and head with its powerful tentacles. And this monster really flourishes and expands its powerbase when someone you can't stand goes to the head of the class ahead of you. This is exactly what happened to Daniel.

⁴ Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, “We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God.”

When Darius made the octogenarian, Daniel, one of the three main leaders, all the Jew haters swallowed hard (again) and went with it, but I'm sure they grumbled constantly, after all, they were younger, stronger, fresher, and brighter than this sandal shuffling, magnifying glass around the neck old-timer. But when they caught wind the King was thinking about making this wrinkled, weather-beaten, skin-tagged, age-spotted, brittle-skinned old man THE ruler of the new empire, it was just too much for their carnal and collective pride. They must have thought, “When will this old Jew get out of the way so we can move up the political ladder? My father had to deal with him, and so, too, did my uncles, cousins and friends years ago, and now he's back in action when my opportunity to shine is right before me. Yeah, when is he going to exist stage left along with his vile religious belief in a so-called Most High God.”

Verses four through five demonstrate how they pro-actively and secretly sought to move Daniel out of the way so they could progress politically. First, they did what politicians do to their rivals. They looked hard for dirt so they can exploit his weaknesses and thereby get him removed. Did they find any?

- Did he ever surf any sites he shouldn't have on a work computer? No.
- Did he ever take gifts from donors while in political office? No.
- Did he ever misuse government funds for own personal enjoyment? No.
- Did he ever flirt with women on his staff? No.
- Did he ever have an affair? No.
- Did he ever misappropriate government funds? No.
- Did he ever lie under oath? No.
- Did he ever lie to a judicial committee?
- Did he ever knowingly break top secret protocol? No.
- Did he ever take a bribe? No.
- Did he ever say one thing to the people and then do another? No.
- Did he ever get Euphrates Fever, you know, it's the fever conservative politicians get when they come to Babylon, and it's usually identifiable in their jettisoning of conservative thinking? No.

Daniel, the godly man, was like Mr. Clean. Don't tell me Christian politicians can't live like Christians in office. Daniel did in an environment where his faith could have resulted in his execution. He, like a faithful old car, just kept moving on down the road of living a godly life in a godless world no matter what office or job he held. His character was, well, squeaky clean. Again, go and live like this, even if you are a politician. Again, do realize that if the godless world cannot attack your character, that won't stop them.

Further, when character assassination did not work, Daniel's political peers and employees shifted into overdrive and started working on a plan to use the law to shut him up and shut him down. Put differently, they would cleverly devise a new law to sweep him up so they could toss him out. Verse 6 introduces us to the essence of their diabolical, mean-spirited, intolerant plan:

⁶ Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."

"Came by agreement" is to watered down from the original Hebrew/Aramaic. The term is *har-gisu* (הַרְגִּישׁוּ) and it means to show tumultuousness.¹ Ostensibly, this means when they came into the king's presence, they came as an angry, fist-pumping, agitated mob. In our vernacular, they were fired up about the advancement of this old Jew, Daniel.

Their words betray their twisted plan. When they couldn't get to Daniel with a character flaw, they went after him with the construction of a new law. Note well how they lied to the king. Verse seven says "all" the political leaders stood behind this new law. That's a lie because verse four doesn't say they all got together on this political ploy. Distance and duties would have kept some from the devious decision, but they, like most underhanded politicians and people, sought to appear their group was bigger than it actually was. Take note, just because the majority approve of something doesn't mean the majority is correct. It all depends on who makes up the majority and whether their motives are pure or not. Truth by majority vote is not always the litmus test for veracity. Hitler, Stalin, and others show us that much.

The new law seemed benign enough. All they wanted was a thirty day law prohibiting anyone in the empire from praying to any other god or to any man representing a god. The law was loaded, no doubt. They knew full-well Daniel's track record of praying three times a day within full view of anyone who passed by his multi-storied home in Babylon. Throughout his entire political career everyone knew Daniel stopped his busy day to pray to the Most High God. So, these devious politicians devised a new law they knew he couldn't help but disobey. They just didn't give all of this information to King Darius/Cyrus. Beware of politicians and people with a proven track record of espousing and pushing godlessness *who all of a sudden devise new laws meant to help the nation*. You must stop and ask yourself, "What are they not telling me?" "What is in the fine print?" "What is their real motive?" "What or who are they really after?"

The punishment for breaking this thirty day law should have raised the king's eyebrows because it was, well, overkill and illogical. Death by being eaten alive by blood-thirsty, meat-loving lions? Could they have devised anything more painful, dreadful, and fearful? Couldn't

¹ S. R. Driver and Charles A Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon*, ed. Francis Brown (Lafayette, Indiana: Associated Publishers and Authors, INC, 1981), 1112. [חַרְגִּישׁוּ S⁷²⁸⁴ TWOT²⁹⁸⁹] **vb. be in tumult** (⚔; Syriac (rare; usually *feel, perceive*); v. BH (late, rare));—**Haph.** *shew tumultuousness, come thronging*: Pf. 3 mpl. חַרְגִּישׁוּ c. pers. Dn 6:7, 16, abs. v 12.¹

they have just proposed using a javelin or an archery firing squad? The mere means of capital punishment should have set off cognitive alarm bells from a king which history shows worked hard at letting conquered peoples worship their own gods. But it didn't. Darius listened to their argument, read the new law on the parchment, and signed away:

⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

He really didn't realize what these unscrupulous, mean-spirited, ideologically driven, jealous politicians were after when he signed. He gave them the benefit of the doubt, when he should have asked one precise question, "What does Daniel my potential number one pick for the top governmental slot think about this new law?" Remember, these pernicious politicians lied when they said everyone was behind this law. They had purposefully excluded Daniel. Note to self: *When politicians start excluding godly, conservative, respectable, and moral politicians from minor and major decisions, you can safely conclude their ultimate aim is godless and designed to drive their ideology and wicked desires forward.*

Trust me, we could preach an entire sermon series from these contextual observations.

Let me condense that future series with a few salient observations from our Medo-Persian culture replete with its share of satraps (heavy on the word TRAP).

One, godless ideologues will come after Christians and the Church (local and universal) through character assassinations. Let them find some dirt on a given leader and they will run with it. Find dirt on them and, well, that's just a private affair. They live for toppling saints with data points about their failings. Live in such a way they cannot find any dirt, just life-giving water. Note to self: If they cannot find dirt on you, then some will be inclined to invent dirt and pass it around as truth. Gossip is a dangerous tool in the hands of a godless, mean-spirited person masquerading as loving, caring, concerned person. Don't fear them because the Lord is with you and will go before you (Psalm 37).

Two, godless ideologues will devise seemingly innocent laws for seemingly innocent or constitutional reasons to attack the Church and Christian people. David Limbaugh's eye-opening book *Persecution* presents the national and legal onslaught to drive Christianity from our culture all based on a faulty reading of the Constitution. Mark Levine's *Men In Black* demonstrates how anti-constitutional, anti-Judeo-Christian, anti-biblical morality, anti-moral law politicians have purposefully stacked our Supreme Court in their favor so they can more easily push their digressive agenda over the bourgeois society in order to defeat and dominate it. The strategy is quite simple: When you cannot get the people to vote in favor of your immoral, power-hungry agendas, you merely by-pass them with judicial rulings. Then, when the new law is in place you can prosecute those who would dare stand up to the law on religious . . . or any other . . . grounds. And it all seems so caring and compassionate, doesn't it? It is really sinful and sinister.

Let's drill down on this pragmatically a little further.

When immorality is codified, making it moral, and morality is criminalized, making it immoral, hate laws can be established to bring the full force of the State against the Church and godly, god-fearing people in order to silence them . . . just as the satraps attempted with Daniel. Lawsuits can also be employed to intimidate and eradicate anyone who'd dare not embrace the new moral dictate. Believe me, there was more to last summer's Supreme Court decision favoring homosexual marriage than we were led to believe.

Additionally, consider the instant push after the Orlando massacre to blame Christianity for the blood-bath and to push hard for gun control. Who was responsible for the killing spree? A radicalizes Islamist, who repeatedly stated he carried out his gruesome activity in the name of his god. Christianity had nothing to do with it whatsoever. Placing seemingly insignificant laws to restrict the people's right to self-defense based on the Second Amendment, is also suspect. Stats show that more stringent gun control does not reduce crime.² Those are the cold, hard facts. If more gun laws were enacted don't think this would stop a crazed religious terrorist. Tough laws in San Bernardino did not stop that deadly terrorist duo. And if these seemingly insignificant laws were placed on the books, who is to say the politicians and power hungry people would not use these laws on their political enemies and anyone else they deemed was a threat to the tranquility of society . . . like Christians? Note to self: *Just as there was a bigger game being played in Daniel's day, there is a bigger game being played in our day, a game designed to expunge the culture of Judeo-Christianity while replacing its influence with the power of the godless State.*

Finally, the same political ploy is behind the transgender movement. Why the quick rush to push this new level of perversion on us, starting last summer? Simple. To deconstruct the God-given concept of society by further erasing marriage and gender.³ The move has got nothing to do with love and compassion and everything to do with abolishing the moral, spiritual fabric of our land. Once more, when new laws are passed to protect this class of people, those seemingly loving laws will be used as a battering ram against the Church and God-fearing people.

One more thing. Thirty days of control, by definition, will become thirty years of control. Such is the nature of godless law. It has the propensity to start small and then grow in order to help establish its reality in said culture. Do not think for a moment that the laws which have been passed in our courts to support immorality and the like will not prolifically flourish in the days, months, and years ahead. They have to in order to place heavy chains on those who would oppose them.

Covert, anti-Christian activity. Believers should expect it, but not fear it. Believers should also be wise like Daniel was. When he caught wind of what was going on, you will see in the ensuing verses how he chose to respond. We can sum up his actions with one short phrase:

Do Ante-up With The Faith

Translated: Don't fold like a lawn chair with your faith, flex the muscle of your faith in a quiet, bold fashion. I love how the historical narrative records what happened next:

¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks

²Thomas Sowell, "The Gun Control Farce," The American Spectator, June 21, 2016, accessed June 23, 2016, <http://spectator.org/the-gun-control-farce>.

³Andrew Egger, "LGBT Bill Threaten California Schools," The Daily Signal, accessed June 23, 2016; Faith Family America, "Famous LGBT Activist Reveals the Scary, Real Goal of the Bathroom Battle (And it's not Bathrooms . . . It's Way Worse," accessed June 23, 2016, http://www.faithfamilyamerica.com/famous_lgbt_activist_reveals_the_scary_real_goal_of_the_bathroom_battle_and_it_s_not_bathrooms_it_s_way_worse.

before his God, as he had been doing previously. ¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

I love it. How instructive! These two little verses are the rhetorical hinge upon which the story pivots. When faced with a decision of being either loyal to man and man's godless law(s) or being loyal to God and God's timeless law, Daniel, as usual, chose to honor God (like Peter did later when man's law countered God's law, Acts 5:29). What will you do when placed in a similar situation? Will you honor God by a much needed protest, or will you fold and go with the flow? May the Spirit give you the courage to flex.

The godless law didn't unnerve Daniel one iota. He simply went to prayer three times a day like he always did in full public view from the open windows of his home. The Law didn't require this repetitive prayer, but he probably lived this way based on Psalm 55:17-19 where David prayed at evening, morning, and noon. And he prayed toward Jerusalem where God's temple had been formerly located. Solomon anticipated a captivity and need for this type of prayer when he stated,

³⁸ if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, where they have been taken captive, *and pray toward their land* [emphasis mine] which You have given to their fathers and the city which You have chosen, and toward the house which I have built for Your name, ³⁹ then hear from heaven, from Your dwelling place, their prayer and supplications, and maintain their cause and forgive Your people who have sinned against You (2 Chronicles 6).

Because of the person and work of Jesus, coupled with His teaching, we are no longer in need of praying toward Jerusalem because the temple is now with us (John 4:21-24; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16). *We are, however, in need of going to God's throne for power for living in our godless day.* You might need to re-read that. In dark times we must not be afraid, but we must learn to discipline ourselves to spend quality time with the living Lord and Savior who is and will be there for us in the conflict. How did Daniel flex instead of fold when the forces of darkness continually and perpetually sought to eradicate him and his holy influence? The answer is quite simple: God's power became Daniel's power through the vehicle of prayer. Daniel had long since mastered the principle which says, "The quickest way to get on your feet is to get on your knees."⁴ He also understood that Christian soldiers do their best fighting not standing up but kneeling down.

Right now we have way too many believers who are playin' when they should be prayin'.
Right now we have way too many believers who are frettin' when they should be flexin'.
Right now is the time all this should change in your spiritual life.

⁴Keith Brooks, *The Cream Book* (Los Angeles: American Prophetic League, INC., 1938), 55.