

The Book of Daniel: Faith in Times of Persecution

Daniel 6:1-28

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Persecution of the people of God has a long history going all the way back to the first family. Cain killed his brother Abel “because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:12). In fact, the Jewish nation was so prone to persecuting the prophets that Jesus proclaimed, “thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee” (Matthew 23:37).

The persecution of Christians continues to the present day. Only God knows how many multitudes have died for their faith in Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, Cambodia, Africa and India. At any time some new Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, or Bin Laden may arise to slaughter more.

Over the last 200 years, Christians in America have enjoyed a unique opportunity in the history of Christianity in which Christians do not fear for their lives. But, persecution of Christians and our beliefs is on the rise. No matter how bad persecution may get, Christians today have the same resources today as Daniel did so many years ago.

1. The Occasion for Persecution: The Promotion of Daniel (6:1-3)

a. Daniel was envied for his position (1-2).

- i. As ruler under his father Cyrus, Cyrus’s son, Darius, was responsible to govern this new kingdom well. So, he set up a system of stewarding the kingdom by setting up 120 princes, who would answer to 3 overseers of whom Daniel was made chief.
- ii. Daniel had ruled in this capacity under Nebuchadnezzar (2:48), and likely ruled the kingdom during Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation (4).
- iii. When Belshazzar came to the throne, Daniel was no longer serving directly under the king until the events of Belshazzar’s feast unfolded, and he made Daniel the 3rd ruler in the kingdom.
- iv. The fact that Darius selected Daniel may indicate that Daniel was already known internationally.
- v. Daniel had demonstrated a track record of 60 years of faithful service under three different rulers.
- vi. Application:
 1. The Jews have long been persecuted because of their prosperity.
 2. America is the envy of the world because of our prosperity. What the world doesn’t realize is that our prosperity is made possible by the Biblical principles upon which we were founded.
 3. God delights to exalt those who walk with Him as a city on a hill, but do not be surprised when men persecute you for your righteous life (Matthew 5:10-16).

b. Daniel was envied for his excellent spirit (3).

- i. What made Daniel stand out from the rest was his excellent spirit (cf. 5:12).
- ii. God had bestowed this wisdom on Daniel in great abundance starting in his youth (1:20).
- iii. Daniel’s demonstration of wisdom always preceded his promotion.
- iv. People knew that Daniel was in close connection with the Divine (4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 14).
- v. 2 Timothy 3:12 “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”
- vi. Application:
 1. The wicked rulers of this world claw their way to the top of the heap through treachery.
 2. When the righteous are exalted because of their righteousness, the wicked do all they can to put out the light.
 3. God can use a pure life to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

2. The Plot of Persecution: Using the Law as a Weapon (4-9)

- a. They could not find fault in Daniel’s character or behavior (4).
- b. They had to criminalize his beliefs (5).
 - i. In this way, they could use Daniel’s faithfulness against him.
 - ii. They knew that he would be faithful to God at any cost.
- c. They sought to persecute Daniel by changing the laws of the land through deceit and manipulation (6-9).

- i. Their proposed law sought to flatter and manipulate the king (6-8).
 - 1. Proverbs 29:5 “A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet.”
 - 2. Proverbs 26:28 “A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.”
 - ii. Their proposed law tricked the king into creating a law that he would immediately regret (9).
 - 1. They tricked the king into making a law that he could not change.
 - 2. Their law was made with no concern for anyone but themselves.
 - d. Application:
 - i. Beware of those who flatter; flattery is often the beginning of persecution.
 - ii. Realize that religious persecution today is being advanced by self-serving politicians, legislators, litigators, and corrupt judges.
3. Prayer in Persecution: Refusing to Lay Aside Our Faith (10-17)
- a. Daniel’s faith was stronger in captivity than the faith of his brethren who were struggling with idolatry while still living in Judah. In God’s message to Judah, Ezekiel prophesied, “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness” (Ezekiel 14:14).
 - i. Daniel’s prayer was courageous – “When Daniel knew that the writing was signed...” (6:10).
 - ii. Daniel’s prayer was pure – “he went into his house” (6:10)
 - 1. Matthew 6:6 “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”
 - iii. Daniel’s prayer was grounded on the promises of God – “and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem” (6:10; cf. 2 Chronicles 6:36-39).
 - 1. His prayer took faith to believe that God had made a covenant with Abraham to give him a land for an eternal possession.
 - 2. His prayer demonstrated faith in that he prayed toward Jerusalem and the temple, even though the temple had been destroyed.
 - iv. Daniel’s prayer was humble – “he kneeled upon his knees” (6:10; 1 Peter 5:5).
 - v. Daniel’s prayer was regular – “three times a day” (6:10; cf. Psalm 55:16-17).
 - vi. Daniel’s prayer was full of thanksgiving – (6:10; Philippians 4:6).
 - vii. Daniel’s prayer was habitual (6:10; cf. Luke 22:39).
 - b. Daniel’s faith was tested (11-17).
 - i. Daniel’s adversaries charged him before the king (11-13).
 - ii. Daniel’s adversaries prevailed over the king (14-17).
4. Triumph Over Persecution: God’s Miraculous Reversal (18-28)
- a. God was working in the king’s heart (14, 16, 18-20)
 - i. The king was fully aware of Daniel’s devotion to God (16).
 - ii. The king believed that Daniel’s God could save him (16).
 - b. God was working in the lions’ den (21-23).
 - i. God sent His angel to shut the lions’ mouths (22).
 - ii. God rewarded Daniel’s faith (23; Hebrews 11:6).
 - c. God utterly destroyed Daniel’s enemies (24).
 - d. God turned one man’s trial into an international platform for His glory (25-27).
 - i. The God of Daniel is the living God (26).
 - ii. The God of Daniel is steadfast forever (26).
 - iii. The kingdom of Daniel’s God shall not be destroyed (26).
 - iv. The God of Daniel delivers (27).
 - e. God prospered Daniel in the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus (28).

Conclusion:

- 1. Do you have an excellent spirit like Daniel? Can people tell that you are a follower of Christ?
- 2. Is your faith being tested? Will you let God reward your faith, or let the devil destroy it?