

Devotion in the Den

Daniel 6

Good evening everyone, I'm so glad that we are entering October, which means it is pumpkin spice season and that 2020 is almost over. Can you imagine a few decades from now 2020 will have its own history book? Schools will offer classes on 2020, like Lessons in Vietnam, or the holocaust WW2.

What an interesting season that we are entering. Just last Tuesday, I sat and watched the debate between *Donald Trump* and *Joe Biden* and thought to myself, what is going on... on top of a **worldwide pandemic**, in the midst of **racial tension**, and **police brutality**, we are going to have an **Election**. This election is going to determine who is going to lead our country and serve the people.

And the question that has been glooming over my head is;

- How will the next generation of voters, discern and walk in godly wisdom?
- How are God's people going to respond to injustice, political hostility and indifference.
- Who will our friends, family, and church member be looking towards for guidance and devotion in this trialing times?

I think some of us, either are not that interested in what's going on, or just don't know enough, and what you do know, is from *Facebook* or other social media platforms like; *Instagram*, *snapchat* or *tik-tok*. And those are not the best source of information.

So the question that a lot of Christians are asking in this time is which party do we fit in? and the answer is that we don't! We are not defined by a **political party**; we do not stand with the **elephant** or the **donkey**, but we stand **under the lamb** who died to adopt us into God's kingdom as a new people. But we are called by God to participate in the prosperity of this nations. **"Seek peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile, pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."** (Jer. 29:7)

Tim Keller says in an article *"American churches in the early 19th century that did not speak out against slavery, because that was what we would now call "getting political" were actually supporting slavery by doing so. To not be political is to be political."* I think he's absolutely right; the church must stand up for the truth. Christians should be involved in the education system, the engineering field, medical fields, local businesses, justice system, music industry and political conversations.

The bible shows us that God does place his people in pagan governmental positions. Think of Joseph the right hand of the king of Egypt, Esther, queen of Persia, and Daniel in Babylon. God places us in these positions and dares us to faithfully represent him.

It just happens that today in our **year of biblical narrative** we are looking at the life of **Daniel a godly political leader** in *Neo-Persia empire*. This takes place after Israel have been held captive under Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonians and then after him, Daniel serves Darius, King of the Neo-Persians.

We will be in **Daniel 6**. famous story *"Daniel in the lion's den"*

I have title this sermon **Devotion in the Den**. Because God wants your complete **devotion** in whatever **Den** you happen to be thrown in. Maybe it's a currier with a lot of lost people, an ugly situation that tests your faith, an unforeseen circumstance that greatly affected you, friends backstabbing you, or this upcoming political election.

What I want you to see is Daniel's devotion to God, even though he knew the consequence was the lion's den. His response to the government was not out of ignorance, or arrogance but they started as a lifetime of holy habits, (actions that he did daily) that rooted him in the **truth**.

That's why I want to share with you how we should biblically respond to political issues, and how can we start developing these holy habits so that we do not become a people that **compromise the truth** while we are living in this land.

How To Develop Holy Habits

1. Dare to be Distinguished from the crowd (v.1-5)

It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, ² with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.

What this means is that King Darius has 120 "leaders" to rule over each region. And 3 administrators over those leaders. So, if we take $120/3 =$ each administrator will oversee 40 leaders of those 40 regions. Daniel was one of those administrators, so his political role was to make sure those 40 leaders were not stealing money from the king, that they would not lie so that the kingdom will not suffer loss. And we find in verse 3 that Daniel governs with integrity!

^{v3} Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

Daniel was different, he was distinguished from all the other political candidates. If you watched the debate on Tuesday you would have seen 2 parties ripping each other apart, digging into each other's dirt and past histories. **This was not so with Daniel**. He had exceptional quality; I would even go as far to say Godly qualities. He did not let the satraps lie or steal or cheat because he was faithful to the king and devoted to God. So, they hated him!

⁴ At this, the administrators and the satraps 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. ⁵ Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

What we will find in this story is that sometime our faithfulness to God might cost us friendship with the world. Jesus makes it clear that **our devotion will lead us to the den of persecution**. And it's not because we did something wrong, but because we stood up for what's right. **We pray** with Daniel in that Den, **we stand** with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being distinguished from the crowd, knowing we will not bow bend or burn. **we walk** with Esther up to the throne, **we shout** with David as he flings the stone. We rather stand with God and be judge by the world, then stand with the world and be judge by GOD!

Since the beginning of the book of Daniel, you find him as a faithful young man in his teens, refusing to eat the king's idol food, and now in chapter 6 Daniel is far in his 80s and still **daring to be distinguished from the crowd**. This tells us that no matter what age you are, God still desire your **devotion**, and you are still liable to *testing* and *temptation*. You see, those **holy habits** that he developed in his teens are still present in his old age.

The author in Hebrew 11:33 honors Daniel's faithfulness when it says, "who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions." I don't think these "lions" just refer to "big cats", I think it may also be referring to those evil satraps.

So my question for us today is if we compared you up next to the world, could you be distinguished or would you fit right in? Would you be **set apart** or **part of the crowd?**

This is a dare to be different, to be distinguished. And I challenge you to start that now so that you may be prepared not **IF**, but **WHEN** persecution comes.

2. Dare to Disobey godless authority (v. 6-12)

⁶ So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: "May King Darius live forever!" ⁷ The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors 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. ⁸ 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." ⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing.

How many times in scripture have we seen a king who is like a puppet to his advisers? A king who is able to be swayed by selfish pride, self-praise and self-glory. If you take a look in our government today it's no different, a lot of people would agree that our government is also driven by selfishness. We have not change. **Only one king will live forever! Only one King deserves to be praise and worship, that is our king Jesus.**

Our society has gone as far as to ban public prayers in places where God is needed the most; in our schools, and colleges, workplace, and political places, we are in no different position then Daniel.

- What will you do about it?
- How will you respond to godless authority?
- Will you dare to disobey, even in the face of extreme opposition and persecution.

We are in a society that says, "**look, its ok to be a Christian, just keep your mouth shut. Just don't act like it, don't read your bible in public, because that means you are a Jesus freak.**"

Ex: I remember in 5th grade at Southwest Elementary School in Winston-Salem I get pulled out of class by Ms. Zimmerman because I opened my bible and shared a passage with a troubled classmate. She said, "If I catch you reading that book to another student again, you will have to go to the principle office." In 5th grade. You don't understand how confused I was.

How can I not share when, **Romans 1:16, "For I am NOT ASHAMED of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes..."** what are they going to do...tell my parents? What are they going to do...

We need the devotion of Daniel in v10-12 more than ever.

¹⁰ 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.

See, Daniel did not act out of stubbornness or arrogance, but he continued to pray to God like he had always been doing. Even when his circumstances changed, his devotion to his God stayed the same.

¹¹ Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. ¹² So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree...

Can you imagine, you have been praying to God, 3 times a day, for years. And now in a hostel situation you asked God for help and he seems silent. The same God that made a way through the *deep waters for Israel*, is the same one allowing Daniel to enter *the den of the lions*.

Daniel has every right to be in **despair, hopeless, and afraid**, but it says that he opened a window and prayed facing Jerusalem. As believes, we need to pray with open hearts facing the **new Jerusalem** where our hope is found in our King Jesus.

In the name of Jesus, we must stand up against any authority, that opposes our King. that means we stand up against the murders of babies, we stand up against this gender confusion generation, against sex-trafficking, and against keeping quiet about our faith in Jesus Christ who publicly died for us.

Know well that if we stand with Jesus, we might lose friends. 1 John 3:13 **Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.** You are not called to be **liked by others**; you are called to **love others.** The 1 john continues to says ¹⁴ "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other..."

3. Dare to Declare the salvation of the Lord (v.13-22)

Because that's how we show this world God's love.

We find in our story that the mightily king Darius realized his **helpless to save**, and felt **distressed** because he too has been deceived by the enemy.

13 Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." 14 When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.

You can imagine, the king of the powerful Neo-Persians felt helpless and hopeless because **every effort** of his, cannot save Daniel. You see, it took this situation, for Darius, a pagan king, to be trapped in the den of his own doing, this den of deception, and destruction, for him to develop this holy habit of turning to God for only what God can do.

16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

And how true is that, Darius finally realized that **salvation is not by his efforts but through a God that continually rescues.**

17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring... so that Daniel's situation might not be changed... 19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

21 Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! 22 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."

Don't you see that even though Daniel prayed to God for help and deliverance, God did not change his situation. Instead of delivering Daniel from the den, God was with Daniel in the den, so that through this, **he may be a living testimony of God's faithfulness**. So that Daniel can **declare the salvation of the Lord** to king Darius.

I don't know what kind of dens you are entering, or what you may be going through right now, but I challenge you to stay devoted to the Lord, who shuts the mouths of lions, who stands with you in the fire, who walk over the water and calls you by name, who has been faithful since the beginning of time.

4. Dare to Die to yourself (v.23-24)

There is no other explanation for Daniel's devotion other than he has completely died to self and is only living for his God!

Once you die to self, people cannot hurt you.

Once you die to self, wicked intentions will not faze you.

Once you die to self, you have been crucified with Christ and you no longer live, but he lives in you.

Jesus says it this way in Matthew 5:10-12, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

What a blessing it is that we get to suffer for the sake of the gospel. We willingly lay down our lives for the message of Jesus, the only news good enough to save those who believe in it. A message about a God who willingly left his throne to lay down his life for you.

Phil.2:7, "Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant... And being found in appearance of a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross!"

In chapter 7 of the book of Daniel gives us a prophetic vision of a **Servant King**, coming on the clouds, who will be called the **Son of Man**, and his kingdom will never be destroyed.

It is written in the Gospel of Luke (19:10) that Jesus said to Zacchaeus, who deals with the roman political taxes, "Today salvation has come to your house... for the **Son of Man** come to seek and save the lost."

Jesus comes as a better Daniel, where Daniel gave us a picture of what we ought to do, Jesus give us the **power to do** that which we ought to do.

- Like Daniel, Jesus came with complete **devotion** to the father.
- Like Daniel, Jesus was **blameless** and was **innocently accused** by the political government of his time.
- Unlike King Darius, the **efforts of our king** were enough to save us from death, when he says "*it is finished*" on the cross.
- Like Daniel in v.17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, to seal his fate. Jesus was also placed in a tomb with a stone as its seal. But it rolled away, because **death** did not have the final say.
- In verse 23, "...Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God." the same God that delivered Daniel from the den, resurrected Jesus from the grave!
- And if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, **then the same God will continually rescue you, he will deliver you, and he will save you.**
- DOES ANYONE NEED TO BE RESCUED TODAY!? This is a **dare to die to yourself and devote to him!!**
- In verse 24, "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."
- One again, we get a taste of the promise we received in Eden, that **wickedness will be crushed under his heel**. On that cross, sin has lost its power and death loses its sting.

Our hope is that the **Son of Man** will come again, and this time he will not come as a **suffering servant** but the **Lion of Judah**, to **deliver** those who are **devoted** to him into the **kingdom of heaven**.

God wants your **devotion**, and your **dependency**. For you to **develop holy habits** now, so that you may be able to stand up for what's right, where you are, no matter where you go.

