

GODLY LIVING IN A GODLESS WORLD

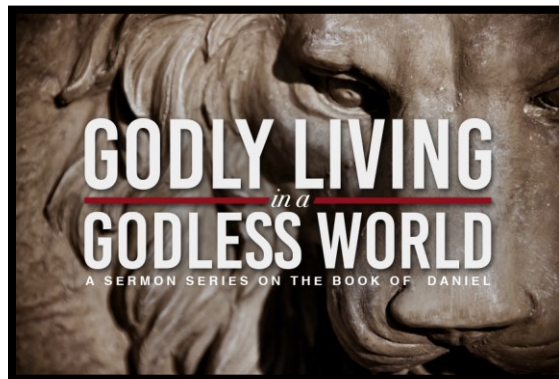
Expositional Study Of Daniel

Daniel 6:11-28

Written By

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Peter warned us years ago that the Devil constantly walks around seeking whom he can devour, and the object of his hatred and hunger is typically Christians who reflect and represent the one, true God, Jesus Christ. For years this ravenous predator has worked cunningly and quietly through his minions and clueless followers in the United States, but now he's not hiding in the tall grass anymore seeking to lure believers to their destruction. Today, with newfound adherents and followers, he is out in the open and hunting with seemingly unrestrained impunity.

- The codification of sexual immorality by our highest court in June of 2015 has unleashed a tsunami of litigation which will seek to financially discipline, destroy, and silence people of faith and morality.
- Duping people into thinking that discrimination is the highest moral anyone could ever achieve, has allowed all kinds of unthinkable sin to be protected, while opponents are unprotected and open for lawsuits, verbal condemnation, demotion, and marginalization for being bigoted and narrow minded.
- Brainwashing the busy, unthinking masses into believing that intolerance is the second of the new Ten Commandments, has led to an outright and angry intolerance of anyone who dares to go against the godless, immoral concepts the carnal culture deems appropriate.

- Articulating that all religions are equal is not only an logical, erroneous assumption because they are, by definition, diametrically opposed to each other at countless levels (therefore they cannot be equal), this mantra has led to the infiltration of our culture by a radicalized religion which has a proven track record of persecuting and killing Christians all over the globe.
- Permitting intolerant, judgmental, and mean-spirited university students all over this country to scrub their “campuses clean of words, ideas, and subjects that might cause discomfort or give offense,” is creating an environment where teachers are afraid to teach on opposing topics/concepts, where what constitutes morality is a verboten discussion because it creates too much angst, where students can’t take a joke about controversial concepts, where words have to be chosen carefully lest someone is offended, where literary works which address uncomfortable concepts and topics are shelved and/or banned, where people and professors are brought up on charges of micro-aggressive behavior for making statements which bother the overly-sensitive, where anyone and everyone who would dare say anything to upset the emotional well-being of a student will be met with “vindictive protectiveness,” where critical Socratic thinking is quickly becoming a thing of the educational past, and where it is an easy jump to raising up (not too distant) future cultural leaders who will gladly restrict the speech of Christians for verbalizing concepts which, well, bother them and keep them from enjoying a so-called safe environment.¹

Folks. If you do not think you live in the days of Daniel, you need to reconsider. It is only a matter of time before the anti-Christian activity ramps up to new levels, and you will be confronted with one simple question:

Will You Fold Or Flex Your Faith In The Fray? (Daniel 6:11-28)

Not long after Babylon fell to the Medo-Persians, the politicians King Darius chose to run the new country mercilessly turned on Daniel. The reason? They were jealous over his possible ascension to the head position with the Empire, they hated his belief in the Most High God (despite incontrovertible evidence He was, in fact, the living God), and they found his God detestable. So they, like politicians do today, crafted a seemingly innocent law designed to bring stability to the country. The legal document they constructed and the king signed merely called for prayer to stop for only thirty days in relation to any God or man. Those who chose to disobey the intolerant edict would meet their demise not in a government Gulag or re-education center but in a den full of hungry lions.

We all know what Daniel did. Day in and day out, for an unspecified time, the godly old saint prayed to and praised God three times a day in full view of the public from the upper story windows of his home in downtown Babylon. What will you do when you are brought up on false cultural charges for not bowing to some new, but godless, law? Daniel always put God first,

¹ Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, “The Coddling of the American Mind,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 2015, accessed June 30, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356>.

resulting in God blessing him. Go and do likewise for this is the greatest way to push back against the encroachment of evil. Yes, flex . . . don 't fold!

By way of review, as you seek to live your Christian life before the eyes of a wayward, wicked world, we have seen how Daniel's legal trouble here is most instructive. From verses 1 through 3, we addressed the need for us to act like Christians regardless of which way the cultural winds blow. Second, from verses 4 through 9 we learned that we should expect covert (usual legal) activity to muzzle the Christian voice and sideline the veracity and importance of the Scriptures. Third, with verses 10 and 11 the Spirit of God challenges us with the need to courageously and continually serve God and His truth not matter how the culture seeks to intimidate us. When commanded to shut down his prayer life by legal edict, Daniel carried on as usual. What a gutsy old saint. Go and emulate him.

To these three contextual historically-based concepts we add several more.

Do Expect Overt Opposition (Daniel 6:11-15)

Eventually, persecution moves from covert to overt status because the anti-Christian adherents feel they can get away with it, plus as they start making "great" in-roads into sidelining and silencing Christianity they excitedly and zealously go public in hopes of realizing even greater gains for their carnal, godless cause. Writing for the *American Thinker*, Fay Voshell, a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, catalogues the various stages of persecution:

- Stage One: The target group (viz., Christians) is negatively stereotyped so they appear to be the problem to the advancement of the given culture.
- Stage Two: adherents work overtime to justify the cultural hatred of the targeted group. Typically, Christians, in this instance, are vilified for inhibiting progress and for being highly regressive troglodytes who are close-minded, intolerant, hateful, bigoted and mean people.
- Stage Three: Christians are marginalized in the progressive society because their teaching is harmful to upward mobility. Christians are, therefore, moved out of politics, the military, academia, and the media for the sake of advancement.
- Stage Four: Christianity is criminalized, resulting in prosecution of those who oppose the new laws of the State. And when this costly activity does not achieve stated goal we head to . . .
- Stage Five: Open persecution of Christians. Churches will be forced to adhere to the rulings of godless, morally vacuous judicial or else. Fines will be imposed to eliminate Christian businesspeople, pastors, and parents who won't bend to cultural teachings. Tax exemption will be removed from churches. Churches will be forced to hire who the government says they should hire or suffer the consequence. Hate speech laws will be created to judge and incarcerate those who will not bow before the throne of Statist power. And so on and so forth.²

²Fay Voshell, "Persecution of Christians in America: It's not Just 'Over There,'" *American Thinker*, may 10, 2015, accessed June 30, 2016, http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2015/05/persecution_of_christians_in_america_its_not_just_over_there.html.

At this point, I would say we are definitely in stage four, especially since the SCOTUS decision last year, and we are quickly heading to Stage Five. Daniel lived in Stage Five in his eighties. Verses 11 through 13 tell us this much:

¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. ¹² Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king's injunction, "Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions' den?" The king replied, "The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." ¹³ Then they answered and spoke before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."

With ample witnesses willing to testify they had seen Daniel break the new law by praying three times a day, the politicians had all the evidence they needed to FINALLY get rid of this old Jew. Like sharks smelling blood in the water they wasted no time going after Daniel by waltzing into the king's presence with cold hard incriminating evidence of a capital crime.

Note three things from this narrative section. One, these pernicious politicians could not help but remind the king the law he had signed could not be countermanded. (And so it is with bad laws. Once they are one the books, like *Roe v. Wade*, it is difficult to get them removed.) Two, their anti-Semitism quickly surfaced when they called Daniel "one of the exiles from Judah." Interesting. They used the race card to call his loyalty into question when all the evidence spoke to the contrary. Three, they twisted the facts. Daniel was not disloyal. Never had been. He had a track record of following the orders of whatever king he served. However, was disloyal insofar as they knew he would never compromise his prayer life for the type of law they created.

Don't expect any less from our Christless culture as we descend into greater levels of spiritual, moral, economic, and judicial darkness. Do expect the hatred of Christ and Christianity to move from the shadows to the public square so the proponents of so-called societal progress can remove that which impedes their stated utopian aims. Trust me, they are headed for dystopia, not utopia.

As they ramp up their activity, what should we do?

- Pray. Do you privately? Where are you engaged in prayer with us corporately? What prayer venues are you attending here?
- Be fearless because we knew the Lord is with us and is working to accomplish His lofty, eternal kingdom purposes.
- Stay in the Word. It will empower and educate you.
- Resist and oppose godless, immoral laws masquerading as godly, moral decree.
- Get educated regarding how non-believers are working philosophically to silence the Word of God and drive it and its followers from the culture.

People who flex their faith evidence these Danielesque activities. They also understand what typically comes next in the trial . . .

Do Look For Gospel Advance (Daniel 6:14-28)

All throughout the book of Daniel we have encountered how God has worked to guide people to see the logical evidence for serving and worshipping Him as the only true, living God. It took Him many years and many miracles but He finally received a positive faith response from King Nebuchadnezzar. Is He not amazing? He will work in and through our difficulties and issues to give people the opportunity to see His majesty and greatness so they make an educated decision to follow Him with their lives. This concept is readily woven throughout the remainder of this familiar and famous passage. Five structural sub-points easily demonstrate how God took the persecution of Daniel to go after the spiritual heart of another king, King Darius. Note to self: Never question the actions of God, especially when you face the fires of persecution. God is working to accomplish goals that will probably shock you in a good way.

Working our way through this narrative section, let us systematically move through those five supportive concepts.

A Troublesome Situation (Daniel 6:14-17). When the king realized the legal system designed to protect good people had been used to sweep up and silence a good man, Daniel, he responded in the most unpredictable fashion:

¹⁴ Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him.

Not wanting the death of decent, innocent, hard-working, gifted man on his conscience, King Darius worked overtime to stay the up and coming execution warranted by the law he signed. Don't you know he spoke with any and all attorneys seeking to find just one little loophole so he could legally deliver Daniel. By sunset he realized there was absolutely nothing he could do save Daniel. His execution was imminent based on implacable Medo-Persian law. His "loyal" politicians who set up this sinister scenario moved quickly to stabilize the wavering, wobbly potentate:

¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

With no possibility for appeal, Darius followed capital punishment protocol for this one, lone, gray-haired praying man.

¹⁶ Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you."

Wow. Did you catch that? Darius just showed us a couple of things. One, obviously, he had been watching and listening to Daniel from a spiritual perspective. What do the godless around

you pick up regarding your faith in Jesus, the Christ? Two, he demonstrated a faith that Daniel's God did, in fact, have the ability to free him if He chose. Don't you know he had heard of the famous stories related to Daniel's illustrious political Babylonian career? All of this shows how God used the troublesome nature of the event to begin to soften the spiritual heart of this new ruler over Babylon. He is the Good Shepherd who will go out after the one missing sheep (John 10:11-14; Luke 15:4-6). He is the Father who longs for the spiritual prodigal son to return home (Luke 15:13-30). All of this should make you Darius-types stop and ask yourself on pivotal life question: What troublesome thing is God sovereignly allowing in my life to wake me up to the need to worship and follow Him?

Back the historical account.

Having exercised all of his political clout, and having tapped all his political favors, King Darius was forced to follow the law above all else:

¹⁷ A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.

Talk about a troublesome situation.

Daniel was taken and probably lowered into a den of lions. This leads to a whole host of questions.

Why did the Medo-Persians have a den like this? Stone reliefs from the Assyrian period of this region show bearded men in chariots fighting wild lions for sport. Ashurnasirpal (883-859 B.C.) was known for his hunting prowess. As Lennox remarks, "Inscriptions claim that he killed a total of 450 lions."³ Obviously, the Babylonians and the Medo-Persians carried on this barbaric activity.

What was the den like? Keil and Delitzsch give us the best description of this ancient den:

The mouth of the den is not its free opening above by which one may look down into it, but an opening made in its side, through which not only the lions were brought into it, but by which also the keepers entered for the purpose of cleansing the den and of attending to the beasts, and could reach the door in the partition-wall. This opening was covered with a great flat stone, which was sealed, the free air entering to the lions from above. This also explains how, according to ver. 21 (20) ff., the king was able to converse with Daniel before the removal of the stone (namely, by the opening above).⁴

Daniel was probably lowered into this dangerous, potentially deadly den of blood thirsty lions.

Why this method of execution? Talk about a deterrent to other God-fearers who would dare believe that their faith was the faith. When Statist power wants to exert itself over Christianity and belief in the living God, they will typically come out in ruthless fashion (shock and awe) in order to get everyone's attention and to shut down further opposition.

³ John Lennox, *Against the Flow*, 213.

⁴ C. F. Keil and F. Dellitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. IX (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 216.

In all of this, we do not hear a word from Daniel. No kicking. No crying. No begging for mercy. No request for an attorney for due process. No, just silence in the face of a seemingly hopeless situation. Why? He was prayed up and prepared for whatever the living God wanted in his life. Talk about trusting God in troublesome times? Are you prayed up?

A Tenderized Spirit (Daniel 6:18-20). Never underestimate how God will use the persecution He providentially permits to come your way. Read on and you will see what I mean:

¹⁸ Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him. ¹⁹ Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den. ²⁰ When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

While Daniel slept like a baby, probably leaning on the soft fur of a few docile man-eating lions, the king was up all night. His conscience would not let him sleep. You can imagine the questions which ran through his head:

- How could I have let those politicians dupe and use me like that?
- How did I not see this coming?
- That's the last time I'll sign a new law without asking a lot more questions about how it will be applied in various scenarios.
- How could I be part of a plan to execute a person I admire and know is a humble, God-fearing, respectable person? What was I thinking? How can I live with this picture of him being lowered quietly into that dark den?

King Darius was so emotionally and spiritually undone he skipped all the kingly food that evening, along with all of the fantastic entertainment. That was probably the longest night of his life as he waited for dawn to break when he could legally go back to that den to see the outcome of the decree. Can't you just see him stumbling through the dark as he walked there? Isn't it amazing his voice was filled with emotion as he yelled down through that breathing hole into the darkness of the cave to see if Daniel had made it? His statement, again, reveals he has come a long way in the trouble in his spiritual walk. He believes Daniel's God is alive and quite capable of saving Him if He chose. Amazing.

Stop and ask yourself a question: If you are a Christian being persecuted for your faith right now, realize that God is with you and He is using you to work in the lives of the godless around you. Will you trust His leadership? Further, if you are a non-Christian, you must stop and ask yourself, What is the living God doing in the lives of believers around me to soften up my heart toward Him? Better yet, What situation with a Christian can you not get off your mind, especially in the middle of the night?

What happened next is nothing short of jaw dropping.

A Tremendous Statement (Daniel 6:21-22). Out of the darkness came, not a growl, but the voice of calm, God-fearing, prayed up saint, Daniel:

²¹ Then Daniel spoke to the king, “O king, live forever! ²² “My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.”

Don’t you know this just about knocked the king over?

Mark well the words of Daniel. One, he did not voice any anger or resentment to the man who sent him into this den. As usual, he spoke with respect and control. When the typical person would be screaming, “Hey, king, get me outta here! Come on, lower me a rope!” . . . Daniel merely showed respect to the king. We can do no less, can we? Two, he informed the king that the living Most High God had, in fact, chosen to deliver him by sending one angel to shut all the mouths of the lions.

God sent an angel to deliver Daniel’s three friends from the fiery furnace years before, so delivering him from a pride of lions with one angel was, well, no problem (Psalm 34:7). God, who created the lions, could have just given the word to them and they would have become peaceful and restful, but in this instance He chose to employ an angel to reveal His prowess and person. How interesting. The Devil walks around like a hungry lion, while Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:9; Revelation 5:5). The One who is lion-like in His prowess and person had no problem with curtailing the appetite of these particular man-eating beasts so His servant would be spared. Dr. David Jeremiah humorously remarks they would not have like him anyway because he was 50 percent grit and 50 percent backbone.⁵ They might be one way to look at it!

Why does God not always do something miraculous like this? Geisler’s answer is spot on:

“ . . . if God were too overt because of frequent miraculous displays, then he might, in some cases, infringe on our free will. If the purpose of this life is to allow us to freely make choices that will prepare us for eternity, then God will give us convincing evident but not compelling evidence of his existence and purposes” ⁶

The opposite is also true: If God were too covert we would never find reasons for logically believing in Him. God, therefore, strikes a balance to accomplish His kingdom purposes in and through our lives. Sometimes in world history He has chosen to act in a spectacular fashion in order to move certain people toward the possibility of saving faith, while at other times He does not perform miracles; however, through it all HE IS GOD and HE IS AT WORK ON A SCALE OUR FINITE MINDS CANNOT GRASPE (No, I’m not yelling, just making an emphatic statement).

In this historical episode, you can see the inroads the Lord made into the heart of the king from the response of the leader to Daniel’s statement:

²³ Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

⁵David Jeremiah, *The Handwriting on the Wall* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 125.

⁶Norman Geisler, *I Don’t Have Enough Faith To Be An Atheist* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 322.

Perhaps for the first time in his life, King Darius had incontrovertible, tangible evidence there is a real, living God above all the false gods he had grown up with. With this information in hand, what did the powerful potentate do?

A Timely Satisfaction (Daniel 6:23-24). Justice would be served quickly against those who had wrongly attacked an innocent man:

²⁴ The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

In classical middle eastern fashion, King Darius executed all the perpetrators along with their family lines. Why? In their culture the guilt was collective, and, also, this judicial action cut off any future problems from these devious family lines. Unlike Daniel, their bodies barely entered through the top hole (probably one by one since it was potentially a large group) and the once docile lions became lions again. They literally ripped all these people to pieces in the ultimate form of *lex talionis*, and eye for and eye . . . a tooth for a tooth. This is all so poetically ironic: They who acted like animals will be eaten by animals.

In one sense this is a warning shot over the bow of all those who attack God and God's people. God will eventually vindicate His people as He vindicated Daniel. Throughout both testaments He warns that He is just and He is coming in judgment. He also warns that that judgment will be bitter (Zephaniah 1:14-18), certain (1 Thessalonians 5:3; 2 Peter 3:3-7), and righteous (Romans 2:5). As we seen in the book of Revelation, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Jesus, will come and deal harshly with those who have persecuted His people (Revelation 6:9-11; 19:1-21). The godless are basking in their badness today, but their day is coming when God will deal with them in the most fearsome fashion. If you happen to be part of this group, today would be a good day to spiritually and humble fall at the feet of Jesus, asking Him for His forgiveness and new life (John 5:23-24).

King Darius appears to be headed in that faith direction with what he says in the final section I've titled . . .

A Truthful Statement (Daniel 6:25-28). Scholars and pastors debate whether King Darius was saved this day or not, but I'll let you hear him for yourself so you can decide:

²⁵ Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound! ²⁶ "I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion will be forever. ²⁷ "He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

I don't know about you, but this sounds like a man who was moved to bow before the throne of the living God. And to think that God ploughed the king's heart with the persecution of an old

saint like Daniel. We, too, live in times of persecution; however, let us not ever forget that the living God uses this toughness to touch lives for eternity.

Let us not forget, either, that God ultimately blesses the obedience of His people. As we read in the closing verse:

²⁸ So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

The coordinating conjunction here “and” (*waw*, Hebrew), can be translated “that is,” underscoring that Darius and Cyrus were, in fact, the same person. How interesting. God blessed Daniel’s courage during the reign of Babylonian kings, and now in the reign of a Medo-Persian ruler God blessing continues to flow upon the man who dared to flex and not fold. Take note, please. Regardless of who is at the helm of this great nation, the same God is calling you to be consistent in your courage. So, don’t fold like a lawn chair. Flex your faith in the fray and God will bless you greatly.