

Daniel 6

What Line Does God Establish For His People?

A Life of Consistent Character

Introduction

I don't know if you keep track of current events but there have been a lot of things happening around the world in the last few months... People out of control, Bombings, shootings, stabbings, axings, truckings, coups in Turkey, Struggles in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Brexit, goofiness of this election cycle, ... You might be tempted to grow anxious and wonder if God is really sovereign and in control. Interestingly, nothing much has changed in the last 2500 years. These are things that the Jews of Daniels day would have been struggling with. And thus why Daniel writes and the theme of the book:

Daniel 4:25b; 5:21b “...*the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.*”

In the midst of all of this God expects his people to live blamelessly, above reproach, so that His sovereignty, message and glory are promoted.

1 Timothy 3:2, 7 “*An overseer, then, must be above reproach... he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach...*”

Titus 1:7 “...*the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward...*”

A life of Consistent Character is key to the consistency of that message

1 Cor 9:24, 27 “*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win... I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*”

Heb 6:11 “*And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end*”

And in these situations we have seen and will see again today how God can use a life of persistently blameless character to affect the world and bring Himself glory

Review

Chapter 1 takes place from 605-603 BC. As we looked at this chapter we asked the question “Where do you draw the line?”. We saw Daniel demonstrate this question through Conviction

and College. We saw Daniel and his friends take a stand of conviction and drew the line at the demand to disobey God's law.

Daniel 1:8 *"But Daniel made **up his mind that he would not defile himself** with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank"*

That didn't mean that they didn't do anything the King asked as we saw Daniel and his friends willingness to obey the King and attend "College"

Daniel 1:17, 20 *"As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom... As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm."*

Chapter 2 takes place in 602 BC. In this chapter we considered the question "How do you draw the line?". Daniel and his friends answered this question by responding with Consideration and with Calling. Daniel diffused a potentially deadly situation by responding with consideration and respectful attitude.

Daniel 2:14 *"...Daniel **replied with discretion and discernment** to Arioch,..."*

They called upon the King and God to allow the situation to unfold as God would have it.

Daniel 2:16, 18 *"...Daniel went in and **requested of the king**... so that they might **request compassion from the God of heaven** concerning this mystery..."*

Chapter 3 takes place sometime between chapters 2 and 4 (Circa 590 BC). Here we looked at the question of "When do you put your life on the line?". Hananiah, Meshiel and Azariaha responded with Commitment to their convictions which ended in a Conflagration. We show our commitment and put our lives on the line when we are called to worship men rather than God.

Daniel 3:16-18 *"Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.'"*

For the three of them this ended in conflagration.

Daniel 3:19, 21 *"Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered... these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire."*

In this instance in order to further His purpose in Nebuchadnezzar's life and bring Himself glory God saves the three from the conflagration.

Chapter 4 takes place sometime between chapters 3 and 5 (Circa 550 BC). This chapter gave us a great view into the answer of the question "Where does God draw the line?". We saw that God will act in judgement to man's Conceit (God hates pride and will not share His glory with another) and we see Daniel respond in Compassion calling for repentance. We also see God acting in compassion once there is repentance.

Daniel 4:30 *"The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'"*

Daniel 4:27 *"Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity."*

Chapter 5 we know from history takes place in 539 BC. We see another response to the question of "Where does God draw the line?". In this instance God still acts in judgement of man's Conceit.

Daniel 5:3-4 *"Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone."*

But here we see Daniel act in Confrontation where there is no repentance and we see God execute judgement in time.

Daniel 5:22-23 *"Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, ²³ but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified."*

Chapter 6

This brings us to Chapter 6 and an attempt to answer the question “What line does God establish for Us?” This is the last chapter of history in the book. The remaining chapters are prophetic except for half of Chapter 9. The year is sometime after 539 BC and may be as late as 536 BC. Daniel has just transitioned from the kingdom of Babylon to the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. Here we begin to work through the prophetic information that Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar gained through the dream of the statue and its interpretation. We have now transitioned from the head of gold to the chest and arms of silver on the statue revealed in Chpt 2. We have transitioned from the kingdom represented by the winged lion to the one represented by the Bear with ribs in its teeth (Dn 7) and the ram with two different sized horns (Dn 8). Based on Ezra 1 the Jews are about to, maybe even started to, return to the land in fulfillment of prophecy of Jeremiah.

As is the case with all new governments, things need to be set in order the way that they want them organized. Darius is setting up the governing structure for the new empire. By all accounts the Medes and Persians were masters of administration. The kingdom was divided into provinces each headed by satraps (Ester 1:1). Provinces were further subdivided with these areas headed by a Governor. Darius appoints 120 satraps who were responsible for executing local government, collecting taxes, et cetera. He also appoints three Commissioners (Administrators-NIV or Presidents-KJV) to oversee the Satraps. As in any good bureaucracy you need people to watch the people doing the work. The commissioners were to oversee the satraps in order that “the king might not suffer loss” (vs2).

There is no currently known extra biblical record of Darius the Mede. He is only mentioned in the book of Daniel. In Dn 5:31 he is referred to as the Mede (also 11:1), is 62 years old at the time of the fall of Babylon where “He received the kingdom”. In Dn 9:1 we find he is the son of Ahasuerus is of Median descent and was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans. This is not the Darius of the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah. His father is a different Ahasuerus (Xerxes) from the one found in Ezra and Ester. These guys came later in history. We find multiple Kings with these same names in scripture.

So who is this Darius? There are several options who this might be:

Option 1: Daniel was mistaken or the book of Daniel is a forgery. We will dismiss this out of hand as we hold this is God's word and accurate in every detail. It is interesting that Belshazzar was lost to history by name for about 2500 years until cuniform tablets were discovered in the late 1800's mentioning him by name.

Option 2: He was Gabaru the Governor of Babylon. Historically a man named Gabaru was established as the Governor of Babylon after it's fall. This would fulfill the statement "he received the kingdom" as he would have received it from Cyrus. He seems similar to the info we have from history in that Gabaru is about the right age and he also set up a governing structure under himself. This would have been similar to the situation of Belshazzar who ruled as the King of Babylon under his father Nabonidus.

Option 3: Darius the Mede is just another name or title for Cyrus King of Persia (10:1). Dual names are not unusual in history or in the book of Daniel. Darius can be a title meaning King or Royal One. Cyrus' father was Persian and mother was Median. Cyrus' was the correct age. Cyrus used Babylon as his winter palace. There is some support from other Jewish writing, the Septuigent, and extra biblical writing where the name Cyrus is used instead of Darius the Mede. Finally verse 28 can be translated "in the reign of Darius ~~and~~ even in the reign of Cyrus the Persian". I fall into the camp that believe that Darius and Cyrus are just different names for the same person.

Daniel once again has risen to the top of the government. Just as with Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar Daniel has been elevated to a high position because he is a man of "extraordinary spirit"/exceptional qualities (6:3). Note that Daniel serves with excellence regardless of who is in charge. Even though he had been a high official in the previous government Darius recognizes his abilities. He ends up serving with such distinction that Darius wants to promote him over the whole kingdom essentially making him the number two guy in the kingdom. Here is a man who epitomizes a consistent character of blamelessness.

At this time in history Daniel is in his mid to late 80's. Even at this age he continues to distinguish himself. He does this by being blameless (6:4-5). Note that no grounds for

accusation in regard to the execution of his duties can be found. He is faithful/trustworthy. He is neither corrupt (sins of commission) nor negligent (sins of omission). He does what he should and doesn't do what he shouldn't. He is the model employee which is no different than what we have come to expect of Daniel up to this point. He is:

Intelligent, knowledgeable and had an aptitude for learning (1:4, 17, 20)

Man of conviction (1:8)

Man of prayer (2:17-18, 6:10, 9:4-14)

Righteous (6:4-5) and listed by Ezekiel in 14:12-20 in company of Job and Noah

Wise (Ezekiel 28:3)

Student of scripture (9:2, 10:12)

Humble (2:27-28, 10:11)

Bold with the gospel (4:24, 27; 5:22-23)

Esteemed by God (9:23, 10:11)

All that being said this kind of character often attracts the ire of those around you. Daniel's coworkers become jealous of his position. So they work hard to come up with a way to depose him. Daniel's life is such that even they know they can't accuse him in the execution of his duties so they can only accuse him in regard to his response to God. It appears that there is lots to accuse him of here. One thing we can safely say about Daniel is that he wasn't a closet believer.

As a leader beware of statements about everyone believes or we all agreed. Certainly in this situation at least one person doesn't agree. And note that once again Daniel is missing from the action. The administrators play to the pride and ego of Darius by suggesting that all the people only pray to or submit their prayers through him. He gets to be either God or High Priest for 30 days. They flatter Darius so that he will establish a law. The Medes and Persians wrote rules that stayed in place (also Ester 8:8) with the intent of making sure you were serious about the law being established. However these guys are cagey enough to give it a sunset clause (6:7).

Daniel responds with his usual aplomb (Consistency, Consistency, Consistency). Daniel knew that the decree was in place yet he continues to pray “as he had been doing previously” (6:10).

He prays 3 times a day, a custom we see laid out in the Psalms:

*Psalm 55:16-18 “As for me, I shall call upon God, And the LORD will save me. **Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice. He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me, For they are many who strive with me.**”*

He prays openly for all to see as has been his practice and he prays toward Jerusalem a practice suggested by Solomon (1 Kings 8:35, 38, 44, 48)

*1 Kings 8:47-49 “if they take thought in the land where they have been taken captive, and repent and make supplication to You in the land of those who have taken them captive, saying, ‘We have sinned and have committed iniquity, we have acted wickedly’; if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who have taken them captive, **and pray to You toward their land which You have given to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name; then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven Your dwelling place, and maintain their cause,**”*

I believe that Daniel is praying as he recorded for us in chapter 9 (Adoration, Confession, Supplication). Possibly even for the people returning to Jerusalem according to the Decree of Cyrus recorded in Ezra 1.

So when is it OK to perform civil disobedience? Only when the law of man comes into conflict with the law of God as we see here and for both Daniel and his friends in Chapters 1 and 3. But in taking that stand you must be ready to accept the consequences as in each of these cases disobedience to the king meant death.

Things are going exactly as planned. Remember the only area that the others KNEW Daniel could be vulnerable was in his response to the law of God so they go and spy on him (6:11). Once confirmed they run straight to the king. Again beware if someone says didn't you say...you may be about to be trapped. They run the line just checking king...Didn't you sign and injunction? Darius steps up and owns it. Then they let the hammer fall...Well you know Daniel just violated that injunction. The accusations are that 1) He is an exile from Judah which

is true but irrelevant, 2) Pays no attention to the king which is false, 3) Pays no attention to the injunction and Prays 3 times a day both of which are true.

To his credit Darius immediately realizes his mistake and is distressed. He works hard to rescue Daniel as he set his mind on delivering Daniel. He works 'til sunset when the injunction must be carried out but is trapped by the tradition that the law of the Medes and the Persians cannot be broken. He knows the violation of the injunction is undeniable and when he can't find away around the law he carries out the sentence. Even as he does he seems to acknowledge Daniel's God (6:14). I don't believe Darius is actually acknowledging God's power with full assurance, he is just hopeful as seen by his question in the morning. So to make sure that the King doesn't pull a fast one they drop Daniel in and seal up the den. But he does spend a sleepless night without diversion. It was the practice to keep the king distracted if he can't sleep or to do things that will get him to sleep.

I have the feeling that Daniel is resigned to the situation and goes without a word. He spends the night with the lions: They are real lions, there are apparently quite a few of them, they are not old and tired, they are hungry and they have teeth and claws. Once again God intervenes supernaturally in Daniel's life and sends an angel to protect him. And potentially to keep him company. I can imagine Daniel spending the night talking with or listening to the angel and learning about the deep things of God. In this book the angels always interact with Daniel.

Darius can't wait to see what has transpired overnight. Although Daniel responds to the king with honor he now defends himself...only after being declared innocent by God and giving God all of the credit for his current situation.

Darius is pleased that Daniel isn't dead and seems to find God's judgement sufficient to forgo the law in Daniel's case. He gets him out of the pit and immediately executes judgment on the men and their families. Oh by the way, the lions are real lions, there are apparently quite a few of them, they are not old and tired, they have teeth and claws and they are HUNGRY. He then issues a proclamation to the whole world once again God gets the Glory ...and Daniel gets a promotion.

Conclusion

As believers we should live lives of consistent character from day first to day last. I believe that God draws the line for us at blamelessness...remember his standard is perfection:

Matthew 5:48 *“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

We need to ask ourselves some questions and honestly consider the answers.

Are you striving to be the best you can be...not corrupt nor negligent?

Are you open to accusation in your deals with men?

Are you only suffering for doing what is right or because of your sin?

1 Peter 2:18-22 *“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;”*

Is God in a position to affect the world because of your righteous, wise and tactful responses in your dealings with the world?

Is God in a position to affect the world through your life because of your blameless response to Him?

My prayer is, that just like Daniel, with God’s help, we will only be open to accusation in our obedience to God