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Sermon Notes

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God's Vindication of a Godly Magistrate

Daniel 6

I. Introduction

- A. Voice of the Martyrs
- B. The Mong Tribe, Northern Viet Nam

II. The Godly Viciously Trapped (vs. 1-17)

- A. A Godly Character and Promotion (vs. 1-3)

NOTE: Amazing sovereignty of God... very rare for a previous ruler to survive

- B. A Godless Cowardly Plot (vs. 4-9)

1. Jesus' promises: "In this world you will have trouble..."
2. Roots of the plot: jealousy
3. Testimony of enemies
 - a. perhaps greatest evidence of purity
 - i) searching Daniel's life meticulously
 - ii) HOW?? By spies

Modern spies: "bugs", surveillance equipment

Ancient spies: perhaps household servants

AMAZING!! No "skeletons in the closet"... nowadays, it seems everyone has some "dirt to hide"

Why? Daniel knew that a far more important "watcher" was studying him every moment... not just his actions but his thoughts as well!!

Job 7:17-20 "What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention, ¹⁸ that you examine him every morning and test him every moment? ¹⁹ Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant? ²⁰ If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men?"

- b. Daniel's exemplary performance
 - i) no sins of omission: "not negligent"
 - ii) no sins of commission: "not corrupt"
- c. personal holiness the root of Daniel's amazing performance
- d. Daniel's pleasures: the glory of God, the welfare of his people, the interests of whatever King he was serving
- e. enemies assessment: Daniel's weak-spot: the "law of His god"

Question: if you were assessed this closely, would you pass the test? And if you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

- 4. The plot hatched, the trap laid (vs. 6-8)
 - a. human ingenuity used for the destruction of another
 - b. ingredients: a king's pride, a state's security
 - c. approach: flattery and unity
 - d. the "law of the Medes and Persians"
- 5. Darius's dangerous decision (vs. 9)
 - a. seemingly dangerous to Daniel: he would be thrown to lions
 - b. truly dangerous to Darius: he was taking on God Himself

Essence of the beast of Revelation 13: Human beings pridefully taking on godlike prerogatives... like worship! He's in the same danger as King Herod in Acts 12:

C. A Godly Courageous Prayer (vs. 10-11)

- 1. Proper priorities: "Fear God, honor the king" IN THAT ORDER

1 Peter 2:17 ...fear God, honor the king.

Acts 5:29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

Godly civil disobedience

2. Willing to die rather than sin

Question: what are you willing to die for? Recent poll showed over two-thirds of teens polled felt there was nothing they would be willing to die for

Martin Luther: willing to die for a theological issue

Early Christian martyrs: willing to die rather than burn incense to Caesar

Modern Chinese Christians: willing to die rather than give up home Bible studies

19th Century Missionaries to West Africa: willing to die rather than allow West Africans to go on without the gospel

Apostle Paul:

Acts 20:24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

Jesus Christ: would rather die than disobey His Father; would rather die than that one of His sheep be lost to eternity

WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO DIE FOR?? Sometimes I think we love life too much...

Revelation 12:11 they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

What is the source of this incredible courage and faith?? Daniel is demonstrating it right before our eyes

3. A glimpse at Daniel's root system

vs. 10 "Three times a day, he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."

a. consistent private prayer (just like Jesus commanded in Sermon on Mount)

i) worship

- ii) deep confession
- iii) petition/supplication
- iv) thanksgiving
- b. self-denial & personal humbling (prayer on knees, fasting... also “asking God for help”)

vs. 11 “... asking God for help...”

Why pray on your knees? Because of your own lowliness and God immense greatness...

- c. passion for God’s glory (already seen in Daniel 2... see it more in Daniel 9)
- d. passion for God’s people (prayed toward Jerusalem... see again Daniel 9)
- e. saturation in Scripture (see in chapter 9: reading the prophecy of Jeremiah)

How is your root system? How are your private disciplines? We’ll talk more about this in a minute

D. A Godless Consummated Plan (vs. 12-17)

1. The trap sprung, the victims caught: Daniel AND Darius
2. Medo-Persian Law unchangeable
3. Ethnic hatred:

vs. 13 “one of the exiles from Judah...”

4. False accusation:

“pays no attention to you...”

5. Darius’s agony: “What have I done???”
6. Sentence: the LION’S DEN

A cavern with a hole in the roof... next day, 600 lb. Lions, devoured enemies!!

- a. signet ring: sealed with King’s authority
- b. Darius’s hope: the supernatural power of God

vs. 16 *The King said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"*

Undoubtedly Darius had heard of the miracles God had done... especially of the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego

III. God Vindicates His Servant and His Name (vs. 18-28)

A. Darius's Compassion and Hope (18-20)

1. Respect and friendship
2. Darius's long night: no food, no entertainment, no sleep.. DEEP GUILT
3. Darius: faith yet fear!!

vs. 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?"*

Darius is about to get the jolt of his life... yet he seemed prepared for it!!

B. Daniel's Vindication by God (21-23)

1. Daniel's triumphant answer

vs. 21-22 *"Daniel answered, "O 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, O king."*

2. "Live forever..." not just a slogan with Daniel... an earnest plea

Daniel 12:2-3 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

He yearned that Darius would have: RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS

3. "God sent his angel..."

The Greatest Night of His life... not the worst!!

Sitting on a rock in the cavern, perhaps having a holy conversation with the angel, the mighty lions frustrated and subdued by the angel's supernatural power... Daniel worshipping God! A mountaintop experience in a prison!

Why do we fear persecution so much?? We should fear selling out more! I believe that's exactly what the Apostle Paul meant when he spoke of his deliverance much later:

2 Timothy 4:16-18 At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul was not afraid of death but of failure to proclaim Christ in front of the Emperor... Christ stood at his side so that He might proclaim the gospel clearly... Paul also was delivered from the devilish lion of cowardice

4. Reason: I AM INNOCENT!!!

vs. 22 They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

Total vindication on earth is rare... our vindication will come on Judgment Day

Romans 8:33-34 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns?

5. Deeper Reason: Daniel's Faith

vs. 24 "... because he had trusted in His God."

Daniel's deep root system: a 90-year-old faith!!! it didn't spring up overnight and die overnight... his faith was born and nurtured by immersion in the word of God, and by constant fellowship with and obedience to God

Daniel's faith made him pray three times a day; Daniel's faith made him deny his earthly appetites; Daniel's faith made him so holy his adversaries could find nothing wrong with his life

6. Darius's reaction: joy, then anger
 - a. he loved & admired Daniel deeply
 - b. he now hated Daniel's false accusers

C. The Pit-Diggers Fall In (vs. 24)

[King David] Psalm 7:15-16 *He who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made. ¹⁶ The trouble he causes recoils on himself; his violence comes down on his own head.*

D. Darius's Decree and Praise (25-27)

1. Final Gentile poem of praise

[Nebuchadnezzar gave us four... one in Chapter 2, one in chapter 3, tow in chap. 4]

2. Decree: state-enforced worship and fear?????

No separation of church and state... that waited for the Anabaptists twenty centuries later

Governments can't decree the fear of the Lord... that comes by grace through the preaching of the word!!

3. Worship
 - a. the living God
 - b. an eternal kingdom
 - c. a powerful interfering God
 - d. who rescues His chosen people
 - e. by signs, wonders, and miracles

E. Daniel's Prosperity

vs. 28 *So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

IV. Lessons and Applications

- A. Concerning human government

1. Human government a gift from God (Romans 13)
2. HOWEVER if its officials lose their perspective, it becomes the BEAST (Revelation 13)
3. Daniel's balanced perspective:

FEAR GOD, HONOR THE KING... IN THAT ORDER!!!!

4. YET our government will flourish or fall depending on the integrity of our leaders
 - a. are they negligent?
 - b. are they corrupt?
 - c. are they righteous?

As the people of God living in a participatory democracy, we have the ability to affect the process... we should hold up the standard Daniel establishes here for government officials; the standards keep getting lower and lower all the time

President James Garfield, 1876: "Now more than ever before, the people are responsible for the character of their congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless, or corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption."

That is all the more true NOW... our nation "tolerates" shocking things in a leader but not a strong stand for Christ

5. Christian magistrates??
 - a. Anabaptists said no
 - b. Daniel a role model for those who believe we have a place in government

B. Concerning personal godliness

1. The grace of God produces personal holiness
2. It does so through specific means: prayer, Bible intake, self-denial
3. Diagnostic questions
 - How are your personal spiritual disciplines?
 - How often do you pray and for how long?

- Do you immerse yourself in the Bible as Daniel did?
- Is your passion for the glory of God's Name or for other things?
- Do you deny yourself earthly pleasures just to build self-control?
- Is there some habit pattern that will cause you shame when exposed on Judgment Day?

Daniel's root system was strong and he survived a lifetime in pagan Babylon because of it...

C. Concerning workplace witness

1. Daniel was an indispensable member of Darius's administrative team
2. He excelled other administrators in his intelligence, diligence, character
3. He was a clear, vocal witness for the God of Heaven
4. Everyone who worked with Daniel knew one thing about him:

vs. 5 "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

5. This translates to us today in terms of workplace evangelism:

Key forum: No longer the marketplace... now the workplace

If we hope to make an impact for Christ, it will happen most effectively on the job

- Have you opened your mouth and spoken the name of Jesus Christ to your fellow employees?
- Have you testified to His miraculous powers as most clearly demonstrated in the works of His Son, Jesus Christ?
- Are you building a testimony by how you go about your job... by the diligence and skill you bring to the task, by the way you handle adversity, by the way you talk and carry yourself
- Do you join in the off-color banter, or challenge concepts with well-timed comments?
- Are you a witness for Christ on the job? If not, look to Daniel as your role model!

D. Concerning persecution

1. Persecution is the inevitable outcome of a bold witness for Christ

2 Timothy 3:12 everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted

2. Do not fear persecution, for the night with the lions may be the best night of your life!!
3. Government traditionally the biggest persecutor... be prepared in the U.S. for our rights to speak our faith are little by little eroding
4. Be willing to suffer the rejection of your fellow workers & neighbors if need be

E. Concerning God's passion for His Name and His people

1. Why did God rescue Daniel, but not the first-century martyrs?
2. For His own glory!!! For His wise purposes
3. God specially motivated to demonstrate His power during exile to Babylon

F. Concerning eternal life

“O king, live forever!!”

- Have you trusted in Christ for eternal life?
- Are you ready to stand before His judgment seat, when everything will be opened up and laid bare?
- Only Christ's blood alone can prepare you