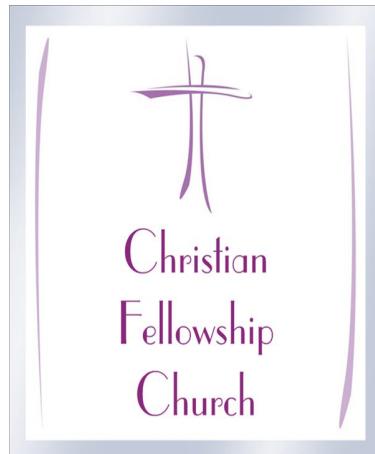




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Ministry of the Word

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by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Daniel 6 : 1 - 4

Subject: Chapter 6, Part 18 – Godly Character.

We have come to the second part of Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream which the Lord revealed to him. We are looking at the "chest and arms of silver" which was the Mede-Persian Empire that came to power at the end of chapter 5. It's head or ruler was appointed by Cyrus and his name appears in verse 1. Darius, was about 62 years old, according to verse 31 of Daniel 5.

Just for the record Cyrus took over Babylon and Daniel refers to him in 6:28 and in 10:1. Some would like to believe it was the same person but that is not true. The name Darius actually means "Holder of the sceptre" therefore it may have been an honourable title, regardless, he was ruler of Babylon but not king of the whole empire of the Mede-Persia. The evidences for Cyrus is supported by history, a tablet which can be seen in the British Museum shows that he took over the empire in 539BC which is bang on with Scripture.

God not only enthrones whom He wills but also dethrones as well. History is in His hands, and who better to control it, after all it was made for His glory. I believe a reading of **Colossians 1:15-23** will affirm this.

As we have noted, the theme of spiritual values pervades the first half of Daniel's book. In the second half, which we have nearly come to, one of the major ideas is that of law. From here on in, we will see an underlining topic of man's law verses the law of God, as well as God's standers and values which are either being challenged or disregarded, but not by Daniel. This king was judged by a heavenly court, at which books are opened in chapter 7 verse 10. Chapter 8 tells of another powerful king (*the little horn*) who stops the regular burnt offering that was required of Israel by the law of Moses (chapter 8:9-12). In chapter 9, Daniel confesses that the disaster that had overtaken Jerusalem is the result of his nation's failure to keep the law of Moses. Finally, in the last section of Daniel in chapters 10-12, we read once more of a king who stopped the regular burnt offering, a king whose heart shall be set against the holy covenant in Daniel 11 verse 28 -

"Then shall the (vile conqueror from the North) return to his land with much booty: and his heart and purpose shall be set against God's holy convent (with His people) and he shall accomplish (his malicious intention) and return to his own land Syria."

As you may be aware, laws are based on values, but they are not the same as values. Laws are enactments (by the state) for the purpose of upholding values. For them to be effective, and to ensure compliance, they are normally backed up by a system of courts and police. Chapter 5 was about a written evaluation of a man by God while Chapter 6 will tell us about a written human law, enacted by men of power in order to discredit a man of integrity.

Both chapter one and six, present to us similarities. They both describe court scenes in the city of Babylon, however involve different regimes in chapter 1, it's the Babylonian court and in chapter 6, it's the Mede-Persian court. Chapter 1 tells us how Daniel and his friends refused to partake of the food and wine in the palace because of its association with idolatry (as witnessed in Daniel 5). The same issue also dominates Daniel 3: refusal to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's idolatrous image. In chapter 6, Daniel refuses to obey the emperor's law banning prayer, to all but himself. Both involve protests but are not quite the same. At no stage do we read that Nebuchadnezzar tried to stop Daniel and his friends practising their own religion according to their conscience. That step was taken by Darius in chapter 6. Here we have the first (but not the last) occasion recorded by Daniel where a pagan monarch bans the worship of God.

I know that I'm going ahead a bit but it is worth noting the following.

The instrument that the jealous civil servants used to attack Daniel was the law of the Medes and Persians. Persian Law and Babylonian law were very different. Nebuchadnezzar remember, was above the law, if he wanted he could kill whoever, but Persian law, the King wasn't above the Law, so if he signed the Law then come what may, that law had to remain... remember the story of Esther which supports the idea of exceptions being made, but very rarely.

'The law of the Mede-Persians' phrase occurs three times here, indicating that the central topic of this chapter is the burden of law to deny Daniel the right to practise his own faith and worship God according to the law of Moses. This matter of law is taken up again in the sections that follow. In chapter 7 there is a description of a powerful king who *shall think to change the times and the law* - Daniel 7:25,

"And he shall speak words against the Most High God, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High God and think to change the time (of sacred feasts and holy days) and the law: and the saints shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time or 3 and half years." (cross reference with Revelation 13:1-6)

Law, then — both the law of the state and the law of God — forms a thread running through the second half of the book. In chapter 6 has the famous account that everyone seems to remember, "Daniel in the lion's den". We will come to it, but that's not the beginning of the chapter. The opening verses, actually tell us the reason that brought him to such a place.

A Good Measure

Darius was a man who obvious had very good administrating skills. We are informed from the opening verse of his way of administering the kingdom. He appointed men of character, gave them responsibility which carried with it accountability. Not a new idea, you find it at the very start of Scripture, when God placed Adam in the garden. He appointed 120 satraps and over them 3 governors. In verse 2 at the end we read, "*that the king would suffer no*

loss." If only that were true today in relation to our leaders, things would a lot different, but remember we have the government we pray for.

Darius was also a discerning fellow and a good judge of character. He noted that Daniel was someone very unique and special indeed, verse3. He noted that Daniel had an excellent spirit in him. This gave the king the idea to change things and making him second in command because Daniel "distinguished himself above the governors". That does not happen while sitting at your desk or in your armchair twiddling your fingers. Daniel was undoubtedly a man of action apart from all the experience he had acquired.

A Godly Man

Without doubt God had blessed him, He had given him many gifts and abilities that he used for God's glory. He did not decide to go into retirement, take what he had and move away. To say that Daniel loved God, and showed it in every aspect of his living, is not stretching a point. His love was not a religious kind (where you put in the effort and hope you have impressed God enough, to love you back) nor was it the "warm feeling" with emphasises on feeling. Nor was it the Sunday kind, that is, after you come up from the depths that you have been traveling all week. He really loved the Lord and it showed in every aspect of his life, both privately and publicly. The pagans had to acknowledge that he had something others didn't. The Spirit of God! Verse 3 is very telling in relation to this fact. It was not the case where the Spirit came upon someone to do something for the Lord. These non-believers, noted the Spirit was in him. I find that such a challenge to my own heart.

I can't help but consider Daniel's character and ask the question how it came about. Yes, it was from God, but the Lord doesn't want us to be spiritual robots, that would be in contradiction to "free will". The answer lies in Daniels manner of life, his choices, his discipline of mind and heart, his prayer life and not just his understanding of Scripture, (such as he had) but his desire to live in its truths. That relationship he had was the "potter's fingers" in his life. He was being led by God through the darkness of the days in which he lived.

There is so much said, in such little space about Daniel in verse 4. There was not even a hint of corruption found in him, the bible says, "no error and no fault". These statements are in

reference to his public life. It goes on to say that he was “faithful” meaning he was trustworthy, loyal, and thorough in doing his duty. What a reference, but of course the same could be said of every believer? Or could it?

What in fact makes a person Godly? Is it because they are a believer?

Well you know by now that the four Gospels was written for all. The epistles are a different matter as they were written primarily for the believer. That’s not to say they don’t have anything to say to non-believers, they most certainly do. As you read through the epistles you realise a number of things but the importance of your ongoing relationship with God clearly stands out, the part every believer has to play as well as the hindrances to this relationship.

Remember the words of Jesus to His disciples in John 13:10 and in John 15:3.

“Jesus said to him, Anyone who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is clean all over. And you My disciples are clean but not all of you are clean.” John 13:10

Jesus said, “You are cleansed and pruned already, because of the word which I have given you (the teachings I have discussed with you).” John 15:3

We have a wonderful illustration of this in the tabernacle. In Exodus God shows us His approach to man which is grace but when we approach God we do so in faith. The first step of coming to God is by “The Way of Introduction” through the only door there is, remember Matthew 7:13-14.

“Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and spacious and broad is the way that leads away to destruction, and many are those who are entering through it. But narrow is the way that leads to life and few are those who find it.” (See Deuteronomy 30:19 and Jeremiah 21:8)

Secondly, once you have entered into tabernacle, you are at the brazen alter which is “The Way of Reconciliation”. This is where you have a life changing experience, however, we don’t come to something but to some One - 2 Corinthians 5:19-23 tells us:

“That God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ ambassadors, as through God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ behalf: be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”



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Thirdly is “The Way of Separation”. The priests came to a “laver” to be ritually washed. That system is finished and it’s not for the child of God, yet we come to the Word of God as instructed by 1 John 1:9. This access is 24-7, for the rest of your days. Praise God. And how we need it.

“If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” 1 John 1:9

How we need this in all our lives see Leviticus 16:21; Leviticus 26:40; Ezra 10:11; Proverbs 28:13. Listen if you will to what God says through Ezekiel 18:31-32 –

“Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? “For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”

But we have only reached the laver as it were, are you happy to stay there? Have you accomplished all you want? Is that all there is for you and me? If you look ahead you will see a vail, don’t worry you are dressed, you have put on the garments of “righteousness, you are redeemed, you have been made a priest and therefore you are fit to enter, in fact you are bidden by God to go.

The words of Jesus to His disciples at this point are important to you and I. Luke 9:23-26 –

“Then He said to them all, If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of the Father and His holy angels”.

Paul also made reference to this in Galatians 5:24.

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.”

Can I just remind you as well as myself that we live in the ‘age of grace’. The light of the Gospel is for all, Matthew 4:15-16

“The land of Zebulun and the land Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great

light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned."

and Luke 2:32 –

"A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

These verses as you would expect reach back to Isaiah 9:2 and they point to Jesus in Isaiah 42:6.

Daniel did not live in our period of time, nor did he live in a Jewish society. He was far from any synagogue and temple, yet, he was a man of immense faith. Remember, when the old testament priest entered into the holy place, it was like entering into another world because of God's presence. The present of God became real to him. There was no light there except the "manora". Was the light sufficient? "*The Way of Illumination*". Listen to what Jesus says to us John 8:12.

"When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

What about the "**The Way of Satisfaction**". Think of John 6:35.

"And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of Life. He who come to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst".

John 6 is "a line in the sand" occasion as verses 60-67 tells us.

Just before reaching the goal of going into the holy of holies where God dwelt then, the priest had to stop at the "alter of incense". "**The Way of Intercession**". Look at what Hebrew 13:15 says -

"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise- the fruit of our lips that confess His name."

We know that the Lord is just beyond, but do we know Him who is beyond? Is it something we enjoy or endure?

Finally, we come to where the Lord wants us to be. "**The Way of Communion**" Unlike the old testament it was completely exclusive, one man, once a year. For us, it is every child of God at any hour or day, however you feel or don't feel, we still can come. 1 John 1:3.



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"We proclaim to you that we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

Knowing God as your heavenly Father is such an honourable privilege as we are able to fellowship with Him whenever we choose, and we have more accessible and available than any earthly father. He is more loving and gracious, kind and caring, more powerful in a not overpowering way. He even gives us the choice to go our own way if we so desire, yet not without prompting us to choose the better way. Knowing God and to be used by Him, what a privilege and an honour it is for us.

Daniel probably couldn't even consider going where we can in grace and yet look at the kind of man he was.

A Godless Move

Right at the beginning of verse 4 we are told of the conspiracy. It was lead from the top. Two of these were Daniels equals in leadership, concerning of the affairs of the king. The remaining 120 were their subordinates. Whatever way you look at it, there was trouble. Rather than emulate this man (which I'm sure this would have been a hard thing for them to do), they wanted to eliminate him. The charge was, he was not like them on so many levels. Was it perhaps the king had spoken about his thoughts out loud to the wrong person or people. Or was it just that it was there was this old slave Jew, a foreigner who refused to blend in with their worldview, who came up the ranks, and how about their son's prospects, sure he was old, maybe it was time for him to move on and let the young have a chance to bring in new and better ideas? We don't know exactly but what we read here in verse 4 a plot was planned to get rid of Daniel once for all, and not just to booth him out from the palace but to booth him out indefinitely to the world beyond.

No typical thing presented itself to charge him with, no scandals, no musical tones in his dealings, nothing that so many government officials unfortunately are brought down for. So the enemy behind the plot and desire to bring him down, went for the juggler, his belief in the God above all of all gods. We talked about history repeating itself last week and here we

find it again. Remember the twist? They would have to use a law of the state as Daniel was obviously a law abiding citizen.

When they failed to find any weakness or flaw in Daniel's work, they came to the conclusion that they would have to proceed against him in a different way. They obviously thought about his weak points, what were they... imagine someone thinking this about you and only coming up with your personal religious convictions which is what they had only on him. They focused on the law of his God. So it is clear that they were well aware of his allegiance to God. Again, this is impressive. As a student Daniel had decided that he would not keep his head beneath the parapet, he was not reluctant to witness to his faith in case it would disadvantage him. He would witness and leave the result to God. The satraps knew what he believed and could see that it had no negative effect on the quality of his work.

This is a challenge to all of us. There is great pressure in the contemporary (Western) world for the privatization of the expression of religious belief - if not for its outright abolition. It is a widespread conviction that naturalism is the default belief system; and ironically, Christian theism has no place in the very academies that it founded in the first place! Daniel was prepared to swim against the flow. Are we?

Their approach to Darius was the combination of a half-truth and flattery. The half-truth was the claim that *all* the high officials were agreed on the plan. But Daniel, who was the most impressive of them in Darius's eyes, had not been consulted. The plan itself was calculated to appeal to Darius's self-esteem, as a way of consolidating his power. After all, he was the king and the official representative of the gods. Surely it was but a small step to focus the worship of the people on himself as a god? If it were only for a month, it would not lead to a religious backlash from the priests or the people. It was all for the good of the state and the unity of the nation. Sounds familiar... history repeating itself!

We should not fail to notice a progression here. Belshazzar, in his blasphemous act, had worshipped his gods of metal and wood. He had not quite set himself up as a god to be worshipped. Darius did. Although he did not insult God in the way Belshazzar had done, it represents a deterioration. It was part of a trend that has continued through history, and will be sustained in the future - the move towards the deification of man. 2 Thessalonians 2:4 tells us of this anti-Christ spirit--

"who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as god in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

We should also notice that the idea of a time limit to a ban on religious practice, or even of persecution, is a recurring feature of the second half of Daniel. In chapter 7 the king, who wishes to change the law (of Moses), is granted control for *a time, times, and half a time* (7:25). In chapter 8 the regular burnt offering is stopped for 2,300 evenings and mornings (8:14). In chapter 9 Daniel understands from Jeremiah's prophecy that the term of exile in Babylon is seventy years, which he calculated that the term was just at the end. He receives a vision concerning a period of seventy times seven years, decreed for his people until the restoration of Jerusalem. In the last section of the book we read of a twenty-one-day resistance to getting the message to Daniel; and finally, in discussing *the time of the end*, Daniel hears a voice asking "*How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?* The answer is *a time, times, and half a time*" (12:4, 6-7).

Undoubtedly there are many intriguing questions connected with these periods of time, and various answers have been given to them. Whatever those answers are, it is surely fair to say that when there is discrimination, oppression, and persecution, the uppermost question in the minds of those immediately affected is, "How long will this last?" The very fact that the conspirators suggested a time limit of thirty days may indicate that they suspected it would not be long before Daniel disobeyed the edict, and then they would have got him. The lions would make a meal of Daniel long before the thirty days had run out. Darius fell for their flattery and signed the document, *according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which could not be revoked* (6:8, 12, 15).

Daniel rapidly got wind of what was afoot. As soon as he knew that the documents had been signed he went home to pray. He was facing exactly the same issues as his three friends had done earlier. Daniel's position, power, possessions, and life were on the line. There is no record of any discussions he may have had with friends before he took decisive action. Maybe it was just the case of, as Elvis Presley once sang 'A little less conversation and a little more action.'

As a student in the university of hard knocks, he had nailed his colours to the mast. He would not renege and haul the flag down now. He went into his upper room that had its

windows open towards Jerusalem. Staking everything on his God, he *got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously* (Daniel 6:10). Regular prayer to God (and, notice, not just once but three times a day) was a non-negotiable part of the expression of his faith. He would continue to pray - law or no law. What a powerful and courageous act that kneeling was.

By facing Jerusalem Daniel was acting in the spirit of what Israel's King Solomon had said at the dedication of God's temple in Jerusalem (the one from which the vessels in chapters 1 and 5 were taken). Solomon publicly prayed to God for those who would be exiled from Israel:

"yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors ... and pray to you towards their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea ... and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them." (I Kings 8:47-50.)

Daniel did as King Solomon suggested and prayed towards Jerusalem - a city we have not heard named since the beginning of the book. Daniel lived in Babylon, and was faithful in the service of its rulers; but the secret of his integrity and faithfulness was that he did not live *for* Babylon. He lived for another city, in the spirit of Abraham and the patriarchs who were *looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God* (Hebrews 11:10). Daniel lived for all that Jerusalem stood for. He knew that the future lay there and not in Babylon. Even though Nebuchadnezzar had captured it, God was not finished with Jerusalem. His promises would be fulfilled. Indeed, as Daniel himself will later tell us in chapter 9, it would be through the land of Jerusalem and not Babylon that God would one day bring King Messiah, the Saviour, into the world.

With confidence, then, Daniel went to his open window, knelt down, and prayed towards Jerusalem. He knew that there was a God in heaven who would hear him. There were, however, others who might hear him too. Anticipating what would happen, the conspirators had agreed to meet under Daniel's window - which indicates that they had long known of the habit of prayer.

Having listened to Daniel's prayers, petitions, and pleas to God, the men of power triumphantly made haste to report to King Darius. They carefully first reminded him of the



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injunction; and he agreed that it had been signed and was immutable. They then put in the knife:

“Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O King, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day” (Daniel 6:13).

What will be his reaction, what will he do? What are the implications for you and I?

If it were possible to examine your private and public life, would it match, would they be the same or is there a contradiction, thug of war? Would it measure up like Daniel's?

If we were to gather under your window what would we hear? Whatever the pass, we can with God's help, change. Creating Godly habits is important and to have a Godly life is a blessing.

Amen.