



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 11th June 2017

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Scripture: Daniel 6:10-15

Subject: Chapter 6, Part 19 – The Law

Last time, we mentioned the fact that law was one of the many threads running through the Book of Daniel. Did you know that one of the oldest functions of law is to set limits on the powers of government? Not that this is clear when reading the way many kings, both of Israel and outside of it, behaved. In Daniel 6, we read about the Medo-Persian structure of law and while not perfect by any means, it seems that it was an improvement on absolute monarchy.

There is a difference of opinion amongst many Old Testament scholars in relation to the claim that “equality before law for all” arrived from the Medo-Persia form of government. The bible tells us that equality for all was established long before that, in fact it was a fundamental tenet of the people of Israel that everyone was subject to law regardless of status. Through Moses, God, gave laws governing the behaviour of all including all of its kings. Deuteronomy 17:18-20.

“When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.”



When they departed from faith in God and their belief in His laws, a great darkness descended on the people that resulted in a backward step and plunged them into all sorts of problems and difficulties. What was true for God's people then is also true for God's people now. It takes more than a profession of faith in God to weather the storms of life; it calls for commitment, courage, faithfulness to the Lord no matter how we feel or what is facing us.

The ten Commandments while found in the Old Testament, Exodus 20, still have relevance for us today. There are rules that govern man's relationship with God, the first three in particular.

Let us now examine the way the Lord Himself worded the first commandment given to Moses for us all. My reason for bringing this to your attention is to confirm the importance for us to uphold the law of God, just as Daniel upheld the law. Another reason for bringing this to your attention is to stress that by doing so, there are consequences, not always favourable, not even comfortable, and can be costly. This is very important because many believers are being conditioned by others to be accepting of all who profess "faith", but in whom and in what, is my question?

In most professions, especially those that pertain to public use and those who have potentially dangerous outcomes, there are always precise rules that need to be adhered to. What good is a beautiful building that is aesthetically pleasing if it is going to be a danger to anyone, hence, the need for it to conform to the regulations of building, health and safety. Yet, it seems when it comes to the most serious of all –religion, it would appear that anything goes.

IS IT REALLY ONE GOD, ONE WAY?

We live in a 'pluralistic' society. Generally, this means that in the same community we have a mix of religions, cultures, races and languages. 'Pluralism' also is used to describe the view that all these differences, and particularly the religious differences, contribute to the sum of spiritual truth. No matter what a person believes, that belief must be accepted as a valid contribution to our full understanding of the ultimate Principle behind the universe or whatever you want to call it. Pluralism, we are told, helps to maintain harmony in a pluralistic society. No one should claim an exclusive monopoly of the truth (exclusivism), and we must sift out what is best from all religions. Christianity must take



its place alongside all the others. This is certainly the 'politically correct' view expressed in the media, and many church leaders follow obediently. Phrases like 'their aspect of their truth', 'the valuable insight into the reality of God', 'an important contribution to our understanding of spirituality', are liberally sprinkled into the thoughts and prayers for the day. Yet the God of the bible demands, *'You shall have no other gods before me'*. Christ claimed,

'I am the way and the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father except by me'
(John 14:6);

and the disciples insisted,

'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.' (Acts 4:12).

The Pluralists give their inevitable response to this exclusiveness, *'That's all right for those who want to accept him; for them he is the only way. But for other men and women there are other ways.'* The media will not allow the Christian faith to assert that there are no other gods, and our children are taught that they must be tolerant of all religions (a healthy truth) because all religions are right (an unhealthy lie). For anyone who has studied different views, they would notice that all religions actually proclaim exclusiveness, it's not just Christianity but Christianity is generally marked out for this message, maybe we are just more honest about it!

The Ten Commandments begins with the assertion,

'I am the LORD your God... You shall have no other gods before me.'
Exodus 20:2&3

The immediate response is that this is perfectly correct—for the Jews. They have only one God and no other; he is the God revealed here in the Old Testament and understood in a Jewish way. But for others whether Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or whatever else, there are other equally valid gods. This is not just a modern idea either. A Christian leader and politician wrote in his diary:

“The larger proportion of those who profess to believe are eagerly eliminating from their creed all dogma and doctrine. They accept the Scripture just as far as it suits their philosophy. Such will be the religion of the future, in which Vishnu, Mahomet, Jupiter and Jesus Christ, will be upon a level; with some, all equally good, with others, all equally bad.”



That was written on 18th March 1868, by Lord Shaftesbury, the evangelical Earl.

Pluralism asserts that all religions are really heading for the same destination but that we all give the destination, and the route to it, different names. It may be heaven or Nirvana via Krishna or Allah or reach enlightenment, or we may just call him the Great Architect, or Gaia the great mother goddess of earth. Call God what you like: Mother, Father, it doesn't matter. The Greeks and Romans had Zeus and Hermes, just like God and Christ. The Assyrians had their own god, Ashur, and the Egyptians worshipped Osiris and Isis and their hawk-headed son Horns, together with the Apis bull and many local gods. The Persians prayed to Ahura-mazda, and so the list continues. Whether we consult New Age 'channels', Spiritualist mediums, Hare Krishna, chant Hindu mantras in our local Yogi classes, or merely go to church on Sunday, it is all one and the same thing.

In 1993 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was faced with a resolution calling on the churches to reaffirm that Christ is the only way of salvation; it was defeated by four hundred votes to three hundred. Did the church representatives know better than Paul who wrote,

'There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (I Timothy 2:5),

and Isaiah who, on behalf of God declared,

'I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no Saviour' (Isaiah 43:11).

Pluralism becomes 'syncretism' when our mutual recognition of one another's gods expresses itself in the ultimate unity of a multi-faith act of worship. This is meant to be good for community relations in a cosmopolitan and heterodox society. Christian certainty, and an exclusivism that maintains there is only one true God for everyone in this world, is to be avoided, and opposed, at all costs. Multi-faith services are popular in our society. This is our present position, today. With the advance of everything, this so called "modern" society is proceeding into darkness. Will you go with it? No! Right, then what are you prepared to do about it?

We have noted that Daniel could have run away from Babylon, but rather he ran to the Lord in prayer. Some may have considered him naive, fanatical, fundamentalist, deep dyed religionist, blinded by his faith in his God and to boot, a fool for not escaping. Who would blame him if he did; after all to be fed to the lions is not the way to go. Yet, many did go that way for their Saviour in Roman times. We talk a lot about this ministry of prayer, in a very positive way but we act in very negative terms. In other words, we know prayer works in



theory but often we don't practice what we know. In fact, we know the power of prayer both as individuals and as a fellowship of believers, how many prayers have we seen answered, too many too remember. In the book of Acts, I'm sure that the believers had their prayer times but that was not a substitute or excuse for not coming in fellowship together to pray. If prayer is the "oil" for things to happen then we need more oil!

You can't have more without a "cross" or cost. Sacrifices have to be made even though the answers may not be immediate. Therefore, we need to put God first and put our distractions to the back burner and spend time with Him, continually, no matter how long. Some may say, "What's the point, nothing ever happens"! You know well the way we reason at times, its our way of really saying, "Is it worth it". I believe you are, I believe our families are, I believe our fellowship is, I believe our nation is, I believe you do too. Prayer is the place that not only changes things but it changes us as individuals.

Daniel lived in a pluralistic society and had to confront similar issues we do today. We have to make the same stand, we have to ensure to adhere to God's law and worship none other than him, just like Daniel, we have to be willing to take the same stand, regardless of the outcome. Look at Hebrews 11:35-40

"Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured [to death], refusing to accept release [offered on the condition of denying their faith], so that they would be resurrected to a better life; and others experienced the trial of mocking and scourging [amid torture], and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned [to death], they were sawn in two, they were lured with tempting offers [to renounce their faith], they were put to death by the sword; they went about wrapped in the skins of sheep and goats, utterly destitute, oppressed, cruelly treated (people of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and [living in] caves and holes in the ground.

And all of these, though they gained [divine] approval through their faith, did not receive [the fulfilment of] what was promised, because God had us in mind and had something better for us, so that they [these men and women of authentic faith] would not be made perfect [that is, completed in Him] apart from us."

We may not have the same outcome, but are we willing to make a stand even in our pluralistic society? Are we willing to keep God's law?



Going back to our text, Daniel knew what was coming down the line. The Jews done the same thing with the Lord by using Roman law to get rid of Christ, and it seemed to work. Little did they know that God had plans and they were just the pawns.

The enemy used what seemed a fair and just system to accomplish the governors and satraps selfish ends, this was not the first time nor will it be the last. In fact, we have already alluded to the fact that Daniel prophesied that it will be just like that at end times too. We see it in our day globally; laws have been enacted on behalf of nations to keep the populace “safe” whatever that means. 9/11 changed things so much as it was meant to do. The land of the free is a historical term and not the reality of the day. Many have been and are imprisoned in the US for their faith in Jesus. These by the way are the real believers, the ones that should be are locked out. Let God be their judge. The point is that laws are being enacted overnight that will make it impossible for you and I to meet in our homes, even here, where we do, and church’s will be censored.

In this account, Darius soon discovered what many others, with less power than he had: once a law is on the statute books it’s very difficult to get it repealed. Indeed, that is the whole point of having law: it should not be easy to ignore or get round. The Medo-Persians insisted on this to such an extent that even the chief signatory to a law could not get it reversed. On this occasion it was used to trap Daniel. On a later occasion it was used by the Medo-Persian King Ahasuerus to protect the Jews in the time of Queen Esther (Esther 8:8).

A contemporary example of the irreversibility of a law once it has been passed is given by the landmark U.S.A. High court case Roe v. Wade 1973 ruling, legalizing abortion in the United States. The name Jane Roe was a pseudonym given for her protection, but it is now well known that she is Norma McCorvey. She became a Christian twenty years later and changed her mind about abortion but she could not get the law reversed, even though she had been the one in whose name it was decided.

What happened to Daniel shows us that, in the hands of unscrupulous men, what should be strength of the law can become a weakness. It alerts us once more to the core message of Daniel’s vision in Chapter 8, no human system of governance is perfect. God’s law is the only law that is perfect, the only one to lift you up, give you hope, dignity, destiny, meaning to life here and now. Obey His law and you will prosper in the right way.



It is true however many will never receive justice in this seen of time, not just Christians, but the poor, the mentally and physically challenged, the aged, the stranger. We can forget that one day, which is certain, all will have to give an account to God the righteous judge of all the earth which is a fact Israel chose to forget many times. That is the reason for Daniel being in Babylon after all.

A HIGHER LAW

The governors and satraps went to the King, Darius, not lacking assurances, but re-establishing a fact that was agreed to. Darius was obviously only thinking about himself when he passed the law and in such a quick fashion as it seems from the verses that he didn't contemplate over the suggestion. Pride and vanity got in the way of Darius after all he was alluded to as being god for a short time at least.

These men where persistently after Daniel yet Daniel persistently sought after God and God blessed him for his faithfulness.

James, the brother of Jesus and an apostle of Christ, teaches us in James 4:7 & 8 the

“So submit to [the authority of] God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him] and he will flee from you. Come close to God [with a contrite heart] and He will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; and purify your [unfaithful] hearts, you double-minded [people].” (AMP)

There are two views the Christian ought to covet more than any other; one is Satan's back and the other is God's face and these verses promise us that we can have both of those views!

There are many people in the Bible who walked with the Lord, and there are two men of whom those very words are used. We read that 'Enoch walked with God' (Genesis 5:24) and a little later that 'Noah walked with God' (Genesis 6: 9). What a lovely phrase to describe the Christian life! It demonstrates to us that the Christian life is about relationship and personal experience with God and not a life of slavishly following rules. Yet, we need to submit to God's law, doctrines, disciplines and demands so that we may flourish and ensure a close walk with a Holy God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

James, in this part of his letter, is exhorting believers who have been dispersed all over the place. They may have enjoyed fellowship in their town or village but now



they are away and according to verse 2, were facing trials that would possible lead them to turn tail and not stand for the Lord. James wanted to encourage them by saying - 'Draw nigh to God'. It's not just for Salvation but in salvation in order to cultivate that relationship. People get married in a moment of time but it takes time to cultivate it, it needs to be worked at or else it will grow cold. The Psalmist said,

“It is good for me to draw near to God” Psalm73:28.

Paul tells the believers,

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurances of faith” Hebrews 10:22.

Men may make their laws, but when these laws intersect and violate the rules that God lays down, we don't worry about those laws. We must come to that point in Acts, where Peter says we ought to obey God rather than men.

Now, you say, “Well, couldn't have Daniel been a little discreet? Couldn't he just close the window and pray the same way?” Yes. “Couldn't he have just cooled it for 30 days and talked to the Lord standing up and walking around, and it wouldn't have been as visible?” Yes. But any compromise at all would have been read as self-serving and it wasn't in his character to do that.

When they burned Polycarp, for example, at the stake in Smyrna in A.D. 155, he had been a Christian for 86 years. Before they lit the fire, they called on Polycarp and they said, “Deny the Lord and save your life.” In quiet assurance and with steady voice, this is what he said. “Eighty-six years have I served Him. He's never done me any harm. Why should I forsake Him now?” And Polycarp, that disciple of John, with praises on his lips and a quiet commitment to the Lord, looked down at the flames and accepted them as God's will.

I think about Simon Peter. Simon Peter was in prison. The next day he was supposed to be executed, and an angel came to deliver him, and had to wake him up because he was sound asleep. Amazing!

We are continually persevering in our Faith. Daniel was truly virtuous, preserving and godly man. There's another key word that takes us through the text and that's the word prosecution, verse 12. The plot thickened.



“Then they came near, and spoke before the king concerning the king’s decree.”

They had spied out Daniel. They just saw and heard that time, and they ran back to the king. These governors and satraps spoke concerning the decree.

“Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, except of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?”

Now they put the monkey on the king’s back.

“The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altered not.”

That’s right.

“Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, who is of the children of the captivity of Judah - ”

Daniel’s original status is once again being used against him. That foreigner. That prisoner. That captive. Not even of the right stock!

“He regardeth not thee, O king”

Was that true? That wasn’t true, was it? Daniel was a loyal and faithful servant as long it never caused him to violate his principles. He regarded the king in the way a king should be regarded. Just as our Lord said, He ***“rendered to Caesar what was Caesar’s.”*** Continuing on, they tell Darius,

“He doesn’t regard the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.”

Now, I know they didn’t hang around a whole day to see how many times Daniel prayed. Once was enough to confront the king as there were more than two witnesses as suggested by text.

Verse 14 - ***“Then the king, when he heard these words, was very much displeased with himself.”***

At least this king had the honesty to put the blame where it belonged. It was his own ego that entrapped Daniel. The allurements are always going to be there, but we don’t fall to them unless our own ego gets involved.



“He set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.”

Let's assume the thing was signed in the morning. They went out to see what Daniel would do at noon. Daniel was there praying. They ran back and told the king, and now he had before sun down because execution, according to their custom, was to come before nightfall. In that time frame, Darius exhausted every legal means possible. He went every way.

Now I don't know what he did, but maybe he tried to find a loophole in the law, or maybe he tried to find something in past Medo-Persian law that could undo this thing. But technically, there was no way out. You know what I love about this? Daniel never says a word. Daniel never takes up his own cause. Daniel never defends himself. Like Christ, he is dumb before his shearers and opens not his mouth.

You see, he had such confidence in God through all these years that he would just commit himself to God. There was no defence, right? There was none, what could he say except, “That's right. I was praying and I'll just keep on praying.” There was nothing to say.

So we looked at the plot, the perseverance and the prosecution. Another key word comes in verse 16, and that's the word “penalty.” Verse 15 says,

“Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and the Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king established may be changed.”

You are stuck with it.

“Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions.”

Next week we will look at what took place next.

Amen.