**Sermon Outline: Daniel 6:1-15**

**Title: "Standing Firm in the Faith”**

**I. Introduction: Quick Review of Daniel’s Life So Far**

* **A. Quick look back at Daniel chapters 1-5:** As we begin this new chapter, we need to take a moment to look back at what Daniel has been though so far in his life. He was taken away from his home in Jerusalem and forced to go to Babylon as an exile. He was trained in the king’s court and stood strong against the temptation of eating foods that had been sacrificed to the false gods of Babylon. His three friends were saved by God in the fiery furnace after refusing to worship the image. He saved his fellow wisemen from death after God gave him the ability to interpret the king’s dream. In all of the situations we have seen so far in this account we see that Daniel has remained faithful to God.
* **B. Introduction to the situation in Daniel 6**: New leadership, new challenge. As chapter 5 concluded we see that Darius (the Mede) has taken over as king of Babylon and has begun establishing his new kingdom. He was 62 years old when he assumed power over the kingdom. What we need to remember is that Babylon was now under control of two nations: the Medes and the Persians. Darius had control over Babylon and the surrounding provinces.

**II. The New Leadership (vv. 1-3)**

* **A. King Darius Takes Over**: He reorganizes the kingdom and places 120 satraps to govern, with three administrators over them (including Daniel). So, what we learn is that the kingdom was divided into 120 provinces each headed by a satrap or what we would understand as being a governor. These men had the responsibility of making certain that the government was being run efficiently, that the people paid their taxes to the kingdom and that the agenda of the king was being followed closely. The next level of officers over the satraps were three administrators who then would be answerable to the king. We are told that Daniel served as one of those three administrators, making him only one level of office lower than the king himself.
* **B. Daniel’s Integrity**: Daniel stands out among the administrators because of his exceptional qualities—faithfulness, integrity, wisdom (v. 3). No matter what the officials did, they were unable to find anything they could use against him as an accusation. This is similar to what we see today whenever a person attempts to gain a public office. The dirt is looked for and those who are trying to destroy the reputation of someone else will do whatever they can to find something bad to bring up from that person’s past. It’s as if the people trying to find the dirt is not guilty of ever doing anything bad themselves. Even after a careful analysis these men were unable to dig up anything negative regarding Daniel. As we will see, their reason for doing this has to do with jealousy.
* **Application #1**: A Christian’s conduct should reflect God's excellence and integrity in the workplace or community. We need to remember that as a follower of God and as someone who takes the title of Christian, we will always be under scrutiny because those who do not have our faith are always looking for a reason to criticize our beliefs. This has been the case since the beginning of the church during the Roman Empire. There were false accusations being levied against Christians such as the rumor that Christians were cannibals who were attempting to consume the flesh and blood of Christ. When Christians conduct themselves with integrity and strong character others will indeed take notice and this will serve as a powerful testimony as to the credibility of the faith. We must be very careful in the ways that we interact with the culture so that we do not act in a way that will bring dishonor to the God we serve. It is appropriate for us to take some time to discuss the way that followers of Christ use social media. Before posting something on social media or making a statement in a public forum we should ask ourselves the following questions: 1. Is what I am about to post or say for the glory of God or for my own glory? The Apostle Paul instructs followers of Christ in 1 Corinthians 10:31 that everything they do needs to be for the glory of God. If we are only posting something because we think others have to hear our opinion or because we have to have the last word, that is not an appropriate reason to post on social media. The next question we should ask before posting is: 2. Is what I am about to post going to lift others up or will it be used as a way to divide? When we post something on social media it needs to be for the purpose of encouraging others and sharing with them the truth of our faith. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that we should continually gather together as followers of Christ so that we can encourage each other as the day of the return of Christ continues to get closer **(Hebrews 10:24-25).** 3. Finally, before posting something on social media we need to ask ourselves if the post is really necessary? Many times, people will post things that are of no value to others at all. The desire to be heard and vent what makes us angry is often a temptation for posting. Social Media is not effective communication because there is no actual talking going on. We must fight the temptation to do it just because others are. If there is no positive impact from the post, we should not do it because it will lead to a negative outcome. Let us not give others the opportunity to use our actions as a way to attack the faith that we hold so dearly. Daniel was a man of such strong integrity that his opponents knew that the only way they could attack him would be through his obedience to God.

**III. Daniel’s Enemies Conspire Against Him (vv.4-9)**

* **A. The Other Administrators Are Jealous**: The other officials become jealous of Daniel’s high position and seek a way to bring him down (v. 4). Jealousy is a human emotion that is very strong and can cause people to do rather strange things. These other officials in the kingdom desired to have the rank and position of Daniel so badly that they were willing to take extreme measures to obtain it.
* **B. Their Plot**: Unable to find any corruption in Daniel, they scheme to target his religious practices (v. 5-9). Just because someone lives a life of integrity and tries to do everything right according to their convictions that does not mean that they are free from attack or persecution. This is exactly the situation that Jesus Himself was in when the religious leaders levied false charges against Him. The Apostle Paul writes to the church in Philippi these words regarding the mindset of Christ and reminds us of the attitude we should have towards others ***“3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross. 9 For this reason also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:3-10).*** Jesus had a humility that all of us should pursue to have in our lives. He had a reason to be prideful, but rather than look out for His own needs he put the needs of other first. He suffered the most painful and embarrassing death imaginable to show His love for us. Because of that love and His faithfulness to the Father He has been rewarded by the by being seated at the right hand of God. One day every tongue will confess His Lordship. These men who conspired against Daniel chose to take the opposite path. They allowed their desire for earthly riches and power to dominate their actions. As we will eventually see, this attitude towards life will only result in separation from God and death.
* **C. The Decree of the King**: They manipulate King Darius into signing a decree that anyone who prays to any god or man besides the king will be thrown into the lion’s den (v. 7-9). As we look closely at their way of getting to Daniel, we see that these men use manipulation. This is a fancy way of saying that they tricked the king into doing as they suggested. Not only were these men tricksters, they were also liars. They tell the king in verse 7 that it was all of the governors and satraps who came together to suggest this new law idea. That was not true because we could reasonably assume that Daniel was not included in that consultation, especially since he was their target. He was one of the three governors over the kingdom, so not to include him is going to turn out to be a major blunder on their part.

As we look at verse 8, we need to point out something of major importance. The counselors say that once the king makes this new decree the law of the land that it cannot be rescinded. The theologian David Guzik explains it this way “The decrees of a Persian king were unchangeable because he was thought to speak for the gods, who could never be wrong and thus never needed to change their minds.” By having the king issue this decree the counselors knew that he would not be able to take it back and would therefore have no choice but to carry out the punishment against Daniel. The king was trapped into sticking with the decree he had issued. These were very cunning conspirators!

* **Application #2**: Our faith in God will be tested, and the world will often seek to undermine our integrity or faith. When the world sees someone who tries hard to live in obedience to God, they will do whatever they can to try to find weaknesses in that person’s life or find ways to cause others to question their integrity. One illustration of this concept is what happens to someone when they choose to run for political office. Every possible piece of dirt or questionable actions in that person’s life is put on display for all to see. All people have made mistakes and done things that they regret. The hope is that the embarrassing reports from that person’s life will force them out of running for that office. Just as we mentioned earlier with the use of social media, we need to be very careful in our actions and words that we are not doing things that will cause others to develop a negative perspective of the God we serve. Let us be mindful and remember that as followers of Christ who bear His name that all we do has an impact on the kingdom of God.

**IV. Daniel Remains Faithful (vv.10-11)**

* **A. Daniel’s Defiant Faith**: Despite the decree, Daniel continues to pray three times a day as he always has, openly, in his upper room (v. 10). We see that Daniel had a very strong prayer life. Not only did he pray three times per day, but he also did this in a way where it would be a private conversation between himself and God. He went to his upper room and he also used the window that faced Jerusalem. What was the importance of facing Jerusalem? This was the city where the sacrifices were lifted up to God in the temple. This was also the city that the people in exile were praying for God to send them back to. His prayers were directed to the holy city, held in a private environment and were done often so that he would stay in constant communication with God.
* **B. Public Boldness in Prayer**: He does not allow fear of punishment to change his devotion to God. Another aspect of Daniel’s prayer life we must acknowledge that is that he did not allow the circumstances of his life to deter him from communing with God. Daniel finds himself in a very unusual situation. He is a loyal servant of King Darius, but he is also a servant of God. What we see here in his refusal to follow the law is that he remains loyal to God because he knows that God is the only One who deserves his loyalty. We cannot forget that Daniel also knows the consequences of not following the law. None of this makes him change his daily prayer practice.
* **C. Application**: Our faith must not be silent or hidden. Like Daniel, we must continue to worship and pray, even when facing opposition. It is when the church of God is persecuted that is grows the most. Rather than hiding and stopping our prayers to praise man we need to follow the example of Daniel who did not allow his circumstances to change who he was as a follower of God. Life is hard because we find ourselves being put into situations where we are asked to compromise our faith. We also are told that being a person of faith makes us intolerant and hateful. These attacks come from a culture that does not understand the gospel message and is lashing out in anger. If we don’t stop reaching out to God and asking Him to guide us, He will give us the words to speak and the courage to engage with this culture in a positive manner. **(Mark 13:11)**

**V. The Accusation Against Daniel Puts Darius in a Tough Spot (vv.12-14)**

* **A. The Accusers’ Trap**: The officials catch Daniel in the act of praying and report him to King Darius (v. 12). This is the point where the other officials seek around looking for an opportunity to report Daniel to the king for a violation. Do you find it interesting that these officials spend so much of their time being worried about Daniel rather than being concerned with their own lives? These are the actions of hypocrites. His accusers tell the king that Daniel has no regard for him and that he has ignored the law. In their testimony they add the fact that Daniel was an exile from Judah. This was most likely added in their accusation because they wanted to remind the king that Daniel is not one of them, rather a foreigner who is not to be trusted.
* **B. The King’s Regret**: King Darius is distressed, as he favors Daniel, but the law is unchangeable (v. 14). Here is the trap that these men were able to put the king in to. We read that the king is so upset about the situation that he stays awake all night trying to think of a way to save Daniel. Unfortunately, since the laws of the kings could not be changed, he was trapped into what he has already approved.
* **C. Application**: When we stand firm in our faith, there will be times when others will try to accuse us or use our convictions against us. We have discussed this already, but there is no promise in Scripture that just because someone professes to be a follow of Christ that their life is supposed to be free from persecution or challenge. The Bible actually teaches the opposite. However, rather than looking at persecution as a negative thing the Bible tells us that we should look upon it with joy knowing that is how we are bringing glory to God. The way that we approach challenges in life show the legitimacy of our faith in God. Jesus said ***“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12).*** The reward for being faithful to Christ is an eternal reward in His presence. Daniel knew that faithfulness to God was his greatest treasure, so he was willing to face the persecution.

**VI. The King’s Decree and Daniel’s Fate (Daniel 6:15)**

* **A. The King’s Reluctant Decision**: Despite his regret, the king orders that Daniel be thrown into the lion’s den (v. 15). The king had no choice since he was trapped in by the rules of his kingdom. These officials who encouraged him to make the decree are the first ones to remind him that it could not be changed or rescinded. It looks as if their plan has prevailed, but as we will see as we continue next week God has something else in store for these men.
* **B. Application**: Trusting God in difficult circumstances requires a willingness to face trials, knowing that God is with us. It is as these times in our lives when our faith in God will carry us forward. It is not easy being a Christian because the world is out to find ways to attack our faith and cause us to stumble. What is interesting is that it is through our weaknesses and failures that we can bring glory to God. The Apostle Paul shared this with his writing to the church in Corinth. He writes these words ***“And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).*** It is through our weakness that the grace of God is shown. God can save anyone who places their trust in Him regardless of their strength. What David shows us is that his reliance on God in this situation rather than his own strength is what we need to do when we are facing persecution or suffering. God uses those times to strengthen our faith and prepare us for the challenges that lay ahead.

**VII. Conclusion: Lessons from Daniel's Faithfulness**

As we conclude this morning let us challenge ourselves with these three points.

* **A. Courage in Adversity**: Daniel’s story teaches us to stand firm in our faith, even when it seems like the world is against us. Even if it may seem to feel this way, our God is greater than our circumstances and we need to rely on Him to help us get through it.
* **B. God’s Sovereignty and Protection**: Even when we face trials, God is in control and will protect those who remain faithful. God will work in ways that we do not always understand. He will either allow the persecution to end this life where we will be in His presence or He may choose to deliver us from it. No matter what happens, God is in control and His way of handling a situation is always best.
* **C. Challenge for Believers**: How do we respond when our faith is challenged? Do we stand strong like Daniel? We do know for certain that our faith will be challenged, that is a guarantee. What we need to decide is how we are going to respond to the challenge? Will we stand firm like Daniel or will we allow those situations to deter us from the faith? I know it is much easier said than done, but may we continually pray to God and ask Him to give us the strength to stand form for Him when it matters the most.