

Living the Code

Daniel 6:1-9

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Purpose statement: God's people should live right before the Lord and expect his reward, not the reward of man.

Attention Getter: LEOs understand living by a code. During the application process, potential officers find out that their lives are scrutinized. What they've done and who they did it with is investigated. Where they've lived, worked, and went to school are all examined. There are certain behaviors that make them ineligible for service. In the training academy, cadets learn the importance of being trustworthy and honest in their work and are introduced to a code of ethics. But LE isn't the only occupation that's guided by a code. Doctors, nurses, soldiers, clergy, and social workers are just some occupations that have codes to live by.

Codes of ethics basically say the same things. Why do professions have codes for ethical behavior? One website tries to answer that question by suggesting codes of ethics define acceptable behavior, promote high standards, provide a benchmark for self-evaluation, establish professional responsibilities, and mark occupational maturity.¹

Codes of ethics may define and promote acceptable behavior, but they can't guarantee ethical behavior. Most codes of ethics are introduced at the very beginning of one's career and soon forgotten.

Introduction: God's people are expected to live by a certain code. Some try, some don't try, and some don't have a clue God has a code he expects us to live by. Some may be surprised; or even deny that we are called to a higher

¹ (MacDonald, Chris, www.ethicsweb.ca/codes/coe2.htm, accessed October 17, 2013)

standard. *But the code God expects his children to live by isn't to become his children, or to secure their salvation, it's because we are his children and have been created in Christ Jesus to live in obedience to the Father.*

Daniel lived by the God-code given to him. In today's message we'll learn what the God-code is and how to live by it. We find out we can only live by the code through the power given to us by God himself.

Read: Daniel 6:1-5 *"...they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful..."* (Dan. 6:4).

Background: The great Babylonian Empire had fallen, its king killed in its overthrow, **Dan. 5:30**. Recall the **image** in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter two? Babylon was the head of gold, the first kingdom, but when Daniel interpreted the dream, he told Nebuchadnezzar, *"Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you..."* (Dan. 2:39a). This was the Medo-Persian Empire, **5:31**. The second kingdom was represented by arms and a **chest of silver**. Chapter six opens with a new king and kingdom in power.

The Babylonian Empire fell, but Daniel remained standing and when the new administration was formed, and he was called upon to fill a high position. Daniel's amazing character and abilities distinguished and set him apart from others. Let's consider being distinguished.

I. **Being distinguished (6:1-3)**

The arms and chest of silver—the Medo-Persian Empire—defeated Babylon and was now the world power. It was stronger than the head of gold, yet inferior. You may recall that John Calvin seemed to have had the correct understanding when he wrote, "We see then that his [Cyrus'] kingdom is not called inferior through having less

splendour...but because the general condition of the world was worse under the second monarchy, and men's vices and corruptions increase more and more."²

Another reason for its inferiority might have been because its monarch was less powerful due to the massive size of the empire. Because of its enormous size (map slide), the king set 120 officials, called *satraps* throughout the kingdom, **Dan. 6:1**.

Scholars are split as to the identity of Darius [*der-rye-us*]. Darius was a title not a personal name. One view is that King Cyrus appointed a man named Gubaru to govern the city of Babylon and the surrounding areas (the city alone had a population of some two million and it was captured, not destroyed). Another view is that Cyrus and Darius are one in the same (Cyrus' father was Persian and his mother was of Median descent).³

Darius (whoever he was) delegated his authority wisely. Over these 120 satraps he appointed three presidents, hence, he only needed to discuss business with the three top administrators, *of whom Daniel was one*, **6:2a**. There's no record of why Daniel was chosen, we can only speculate. No doubt Darius was told about the handwriting on the wall incident and was informed that Daniel, a Jewish captive and administrator in Nebuchadnezzar's reign, interpreted the writing. Not only did Daniel possess the wisdom and gifts to administer, but he was also both Jewish and elderly and wouldn't be a likely candidate to attempt an overthrow.

Darius needed people he could trust. The 120 satraps reported to the three administrators, presumably 40 to each

² (Calvin, 2003, p. 173)

³ (Miller, 1994, pp. 171-175)

one, **6:2b**. The satraps were charged with collecting taxes and running government agencies and programs. This opened the door for bribery and corruption in the massive kingdom with all the people and monies collected and managed.

Darius soon realized hiring Daniel for the job had been a good decision. Daniel distinguished himself above the others because he had an *excellent spirit*, **6:3a**. This spirit speaks of Daniel's personality and attitude. Not only did Daniel possess wisdom and ability, he had **character** and a **positive** attitude. These are what employers look for in potential employees. This is what bosses look for in subordinates. This is what workers hope to find in their supervisors. Teachers want this from students, and vice versa.

Most people can be taught a skill, but character and attitude are what people bring with them. These aren't "taught" so much as they are "caught". The Bible says as much, turn to Deuteronomy 6. Moses was giving instruction to parents about rearing children. He began with what children need to know. Children need to know who God is, to love him with their whole being, and to obey his word, **Deut. 6:4-6**. This is it. This is the God-code: **know** God, **love** God, **obey** God.

Then Moses tells how this is accomplished. Children learn who God is, to love him, and to obey him through his word and the example of their parents. Moses says it begins with teaching; they need to know there is a code—God's code—to live by, but they also need to see it lived out, **6:7-9**.

Daniel's character showed through even with the change of powers. As a result, Darius planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom, **Dan. 6:3b**. Circumstances **reveal** character

they don't change it. However, the king's plan didn't sit well with the other appointees.

How was it that Daniel was able to maintain a positive attitude and a gracious heart when so much changed around him? Remember Daniel was born into Jewish nobility and was being raised to serve the king of Judah when he was taken against his will to a foreign country to serve a pagan king. Yet he maintained a positive attitude and gracious heart. The key to being distinguished in service to God is being faithful.

II. **Being faithful (6:4-5)**

The other two presidents and the satraps became jealous of Daniel and tried to backstab him, **Dan. 6:4a**. They used every means at their disposal to find fault with Daniel concerning his work. Why did God allow Daniel to be subjected to such treachery? Hadn't Daniel done enough? Hadn't he already proved himself? Shouldn't he get a break in his old age? Because ultimately, life isn't about Daniel and his comfort. Life is about leading others to the one true God.

Why were they so upset Daniel was being promoted over them? One writer suggests they were keeping part of the taxes they collected and were afraid Daniel would put a stop to it. That may be true, but, more than anything, I believe Daniel's honesty and work ethic exposed their dishonesty and lack of work ethic—and they didn't like it. So they looked to find some dirt, but couldn't, **6:4b**.

What is our reputation? How are we to live and why? What does it look like to live out the God-code? Paul gives us instruction in his letter to Titus. He tells us both how we are to live and why we are to live that way. He begins with

salvation; we are to live godly lives because of our salvation, not for it, **Titus 2:11-12**.

Then Paul reemphasized what he just said by restating it in the next two verses. Notice our salvation in Christ not only provides an eternal salvation after this life, but it also enables—and *calls us*—to a holy life now, **2:13-14**. Clearly, our salvation in Christ is the **cause** of good works, not the other way around. Good works are not the cause of our salvation, **3:4-5—SALVATION!**

Back to Daniel. Those trying to find fault in Daniel were at a loss when one of them came up with a dandy idea. If they couldn't find a rule he broke, they'd change the rules. They'd make a rule that goes against the values that Daniel lived by, **Dan. 6:5**. One commentator makes two observations about Daniel, (1) **his convictions weren't hidden** and (2) **his commitment wasn't compromised**.⁴

Perhaps someone reported his resolve of some 60 plus years earlier, **1:8a**. Daniel resolved to be faithful to God's commands. Six decades later he's still found faithful, **6:4c**.

Maybe you're thinking there is more to it than that. There's more to it than just being faithful by obeying God's word. After all, Daniel was given wisdom by God and special insight into dreams. Others like Elisha performed miracles. The Apostle Paul was a doctor of the law and he was given special revelation. But these gifts aren't what God is looking for; he's the one who gave them!

As believers we are *servants* of Christ and *stewards* or *custodians* of God's mysteries (the truths revealed to us by

⁴ (Miller, 1994, p. 179)

God's Spirit) **1 Cor. 4:1**. One commentator says these *mysteries* include "the message of the Cross known only by the Spirit's revelation".⁵ In other words, people ought to see us as both workers for Christ and keepers of the truth.

This is what Christ requires of his stewards—that they be found **faithful**. That's it, **4:2**. He doesn't demand intellect, wealth, might, good looks, eloquent speech, or anything else. *He provides us with all the talent and gifts we need to do what he has called us to do.* He only requires our faithfulness. That's what Daniel had. That's what Paul had. How? How did they keep focused? Paul explains.

He wasn't concerned with being judged by fellow believers, nonbelievers, or even by his own self, **4:3**. Paul said he wasn't even aware of anything he'd hold against himself, but that doesn't mean he was innocent, **4:4a**.

Paul committed himself to be judged by the Lord, **4:4b**. The Lord was the only one Paul was concerned about pleasing. Paul lived before an audience of One, **4:5**. Daniel also lived before an audience of **One**. And because he did, he was targeted.

Daniel was distinguished, faithful, and targeted.

III. **Being targeted (6:6-9)**

Today we might call this bullying. Bullying isn't anything new, and it's not limited to school children. The driving force behind bullying is envy or jealousy, Proverbs 27:4 says, "*Wrath is cruel, anger overwhelming, but who can stand before **jealousy?***"

⁵ (Wolvoord & Zuck, 1983, p. 512)

Daniel's jealous co-workers drafted a document that just needed to be signed by the king. But how would they get the king to sign a document that would set Daniel up for failure? Remember, Darius liked Daniel and was preparing to promote him. They had a two-pronged approach.

First, they lied about who wrote the decree, indicating that all three of the presidents had drafted it. Secondly, they appealed to the king's vanity. The decree actually set the king up as god for a month, **Dan. 6:6-7**.

That lions would be kept in dens was common for kings in the ancient Near East. Kings often participated in the sport of lion hunting; hence lions were kept on hand for the sport.⁶ And they would be conveniently available for executions.

They'd already written it out, all Darius needed to do was to sign it, **6:8a**. He should have waited and considered the matter before he made a hasty, emotional decision.

The Medes and Persians had a law that once the king signed a decree it could not be revoked, even by the king himself, **6:8b**. Without considering the consequences of what he was doing, he signed his name, **6:9**. Thus was signed the fate of anyone that dared bring a petition to anyone but Darius for 30 days.

Conclusion: Signing the decree sealed Daniel's punishment. Daniel's peers were so convinced he would remain true to his God-code that they knew he would defy the king's command, even if it meant his death. They knew Daniel would remain faithful. Do the people in your life

⁶ (Baldwin, 1978, p. 141)

know? Do you? Faithfulness is the key. Remember what we learned, “*Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful*” (1 Cor. 4:2).

We all live lives of faith, the question is, who are we faithful to? Do we pledge our faithfulness to God or government? To our Lord or ourselves? To Christ or comfort? To God’s word or the party line? Who is our audience? What is our code?

Daniel lived before an audience of One. Daniel was faithful. Daniel lived with the expectation of a greater reward. Daniel lived in light of what would be after this life. Daniel lived life in the shadow of eternity. Daniel lived the God-code.