

“A PASSION FOR EXCELLENCE”

Daniel 6:1-9

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INTRODUCTION

Today we hear a great deal of emphasis upon **excellence**.

After Cyrus conquered Babylon and appointed Darius, Darius began organizing his kingdom:

- He appointed 120 satraps over the entire realm.
- These 120 leaders were in turn under the jurisdiction of and accountable to only **3 commissioners**.
- The king’s purpose in doing this was that he “might not suffer loss.”
- Daniel was one of these commissioners.
- Daniel did such an excellent job that he “distinguished himself above the other two commissioners and all the satraps (v. 3).
- Daniel “possessed an extraordinary spirit.” It is the inner spirit that determines our behavior.
- Darius planned to elevate Daniel over the entire “kingdom”—formerly Babylon.

In this passage we see three spirits, one of which actually displays excellence: an *envious* spirit, an *egotistic* spirit, and an *excellent* spirit.

God wants you to display an excellent spirit.

I. AN ENVOIOUS SPIRIT (4-9)

The first group we notice possessing the spirit of envy or jealousy.

What led to such envy?

- Daniel was about to be promoted above all of them (v. 3).
- Daniel was a foreigner and a Jew (cf. v. 13).
- Daniel shamed them due to his excellent spirit and superior work ethic.
- Daniel was faithful to his God—his extraordinary dependence upon his **religious faith** made them uncomfortable and guilty.
- Daniel was older, they evidently quite young by comparison.

Their solution to their dilemma? Find fault with Daniel so that he will be put down.

A. Fault-finding (v. 4-5)

1. Failure to find a basis for fault against Daniel in government affairs (4)

- No _____
- No _____
- No _____ toward the king (v. 22)

- In contrast—**he was** _____.
 - A sharp contrast to many politicians today.
2. Success in finding a basis—We can only find a ground of accusation if we trump up a charge in relation to “the law of his God.” (v. 5) **His religious consistency was well known.** He had strength of commitment. Thus, they knew they could trap him.
- If we were accused of loyalty and consistency to God, would there be enough evidence to convict us?*
- B. Conspiracy (6, 7a)—“They came thronging”—cf. vv. 6, 11, 15
- C. Flattery (6b—King Darius, live forever”)
- D. Deception (7)
- Common cause—“All” leaders of every kind”
 - This will be for the good of the king in order to build him and his kingdom.
- E. Persistence (7-9)
- Strong emphasis—“statute”, “binding injunction”, “set forth”=“make strong” (v. 7)
 - Powerful enforcement (cast into the lions’ den (7)
 - Put it in writing and sign it (8)
 - Do not allow it to be altered—according to “the law of the Medes and Persians—which may not be revoked.” (v. 8)
 - The king signed the document (9)

II. AN EGOTISTIC SPIRIT (6-9)

- A. Imagined Immortality (6b)
- B. Invested Deity—kings were often regarded as gods
1. This evidences an inferior conception of gods—just as many today **make God into _____ image.**
 2. They were considered representatives of heavenly authorities—yet to the common people they became as actual gods (cf. the use of images and statues today).
 3. The pledge of loyalty with such prayer to the king would thus *represent the gods of all the peoples in the Persian Empire and would evidence the solidarity of all the peoples—like the image of Daniel 3.*
- C. Interest in Flattery
1. He had the power to make such a decree (7, 8)
 2. He became the unique receiver of prayer (7—with a limitation of 30 days)
 3. He would be the purveyor of the penalty (7c): lion’s den—historical accuracy.

However, this king becomes bound to his own laws—according to the customs of the Medes and Persians. So do we become bound to the results our own prideful and foolish behavior.

- Note the _____ and the wickedness of his action.
- Note the _____ of his action—he should have slept on it, or at least thought it through.
- Note the _____ of his action—he needed to admit his error and to change it.
- **Guard against flattery—it will ruin you!**

III. AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT (1-3)

- A. Daniel was well trained (chapter 1).
- B. Daniel was gifted by God (1:17, 20).
- C. Daniel was experienced (70 years of service under various administrations!).
- D. Daniel had understanding (1:20).
- E. Daniel was cooperative (ch. 1).
- F. Daniel was efficient (6:4).
- G. Daniel was motivated.
 - 1. For the good of his people Israel—cf. his prayer in chapter 9
 - 2. In his concern even for pagan kings such as Nebuchadnezzar (chapters 2, 4) and now Darius.
- H. Daniel was devoted (6:4—no corruption).
- I. Daniel was faithful (6:4).
- J. **Daniel's excellent spirit came from his God** (5:11-12, 14).

How we need an excellent spirit today!

This is why I am a fundamentalist—and not an evangelical:

- Excellence in Evangelism
- Excellence in Standards
- Excellence in Music
- Excellence in Education
- Excellence in Culture

Our behavior must not depend upon what is popular or acceptable, but on what is highest and best. OUR GOD IS WORTH IT.

CONCLUSION

Philippians 1:10

Love must be accompanied by real knowledge and discernment.

How we need a passion for **SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE**.