

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## Daniel: a Praying Man

*Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. (Daniel 6:6-10)*

How would you react to news that such a law as Darius signed had just been enacted in our country? I receive a steady flow of e-mail messages from individuals and organizations that hold our national government in rather low esteem and therefore typically attempt to serve as "watch-dogs" to alert people against ill conceived or generally bad laws that are proposed, many of them directly dealing with the moral and spiritual convictions of Bible believing Christians. Of course many of our national leaders view any "Christian" who believes the Bible as "radical," "right wing," "hate-promoting," and "extremist." I often wonder when I hear or read the comments from some of these leaders; what is a "Christian" who does not believe the Bible? I share many of these concerns, and I certainly do not always find grounds for comfort when I read or hear of the regulations being proposed in Washington or of the attitudes of many of our leaders toward historical Christian people and Christian values.

Despite all my concern, and despite the near-panic alarms that many of these "watch-dog" organizations are sounding, I must confess that I seldom witness any in our day, who react to the news of such laws as Daniel reacted to the news of such a law in his day. He was an exile, a "prisoner of war," with no inherent rights other than what had been given to him over his lifetime in Babylon because of God's rich presence and blessing in his life. He was not a citizen of Babylon. But he had something that no law could take away—faith in his God.

### The Law

*All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man*

*for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.* Politicians and others who have an "agenda," a personal ax to grind, will often overstate their case. Daniel was one of the "presidents" appointed by Darius, in fact the leader of that elite group. Did Daniel agree to this proposed law? When someone states a belief and follows it with "Everyone knows..." or "All of our forefathers believed..." they destroy their credibility in my mind. Their words are about as wise and balanced as the fifteen year-old child asking his/her parent's permission to do something that he/she already knows the parent will not approve. "Everyone is going. All the other parents have already given their permission. If I don't go, I'll be the only person in my class who doesn't go." In any church or fellowship of churches that has existed for a respectable time you can read over a hundred or so years and find individuals, of course always highly respected men, who believed just about anything. It is a logical fallacy (appeal to a false authority) to claim that a certain respected person believed what you believe unless that person by right was the exclusive authority on the question or belief involved. While historical Christians should respect their history, they appeal to a false authority when they rely on those men for their beliefs instead of going to Scripture, the true exclusive authority for what we should believe and practice. Often instead of appealing to a particular person from the past, people commit another form of this same fallacy by appealing to an ancient and respected confession of faith.

A number of specific logical fallacy arguments may surface under this general heading. For example, here are just a few:

1. **Argumentum ad Verecundiam.** You should accept this idea because a certain respected person accepted it.

2. **Argumentum ab Annis.** Argument because of age; you should believe it because it is of very old origin. Truth is old, but so is error. How long has Arianism been around? Or the various forms of modalism? Or Gnosticism (New Age ideas as we likely know it today)

3. **Argument of the beard.** This fallacy appears when the person holding a different view either seeks acceptance or distinction based on degree of difference. "Reject this idea because it differs only in degree from what you already reject." Or "We agree on almost all other points except this one. Therefore we should agree on this point as well."

Several other related logical fallacies might be mentioned, but these give you a sense of how we all tend to avoid the obvious when we seek to promote our preferred ideas or beliefs. In the case of Daniel's political enemies they appealed to Darius that all of his respected underlings agreed and recommended his approval of this law. How could the king go against such a united opinion from the very men he had appointed?

Of course the absurdity of the law presents us with an incredible study of man's self-worship and his rejection of God. How do you justify that all prayer, all requests of any kind, be presented only to the king for a period of thirty days? If the king is God, why not make it a permanent law? And if the king is not God, why offend God by enacting the law at all, even for thirty days?

### **Daniel's Reaction—Our Model**

*Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. "...his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem..."* Do you get the impression that prayer was a regular habit with Daniel? "...three times a day..." makes the point. Daniel was never too busy to take the time to retreat to his chamber and pray, not just occasionally or when he sensed a special need, but every day, three times a day.

If you just heard of such a law being passed by Congress and signed by the President, what would you do? Daniel *"...prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."* We can reluctantly accept that Daniel prayed. We'd urge people to do likewise, though we'd also urge them to do all sorts of other things as well.

Do not mistake Daniel's praying for a pacifistic attitude. On occasion when discussing what most studious Christians would consider to be unjust

laws or regulations, I have suggested prayer as our primary weapon, only to hear my conversational partner respond in sharp criticism as if prayer means pacifistic acquiescence to the errant law. Only if you view God as refusing to step into human events and intervene should you view prayer as the primary tool of the pacifist. Often God can do—and on occasion does do—what we cannot imagine. We should never hold such a low view of God or of prayer as to dismiss it with such low esteem.

Daniel's prayer is further described. *"...and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."* What about this law and its potential threat to Daniel would give him grounds to offer a thanksgiving prayer? I am convinced that an entrenched low view of God and of prayer causes us all too often to pray with hands wringing in fear or doubt, eventually to complain because our prayer wasn't answered. Why should God answer a prayer from someone who holds Him and His appointed way of communicating directly with Him in such low regard? James 4:1-6 provides a disturbing commentary on such "prayer-less" prayers. I suggest that James 4:7-10 describes the results of a sincere, genuine, and believing prayer to God.

Clearly Daniel so deeply trusted in God as to fully believe that God would not long permit such a despicable edict to be enforced against His captive people in Babylon, not even for thirty days. Anticipating God's disruption of the king's edict, Daniel started thanking God for deliverance long before deliverance arrived! What a man, this Daniel! What a God he worshipped!

Follow the time frame of the king's edict. Think back over the last thirty days. How many things have you asked God to do in your life or for those close to you? How believing were you when you prayed? Did you so strongly believe that God would answer your prayer that, even as you asked Him for the blessing, you also thanked Him for the answer? If that was not your attitude as you prayed, perhaps your doubting attitude might explain why in your case the prayer was not answered. No, I do not suggest that God is obligated to answer every believing prayer. I rather suggest that prayer, true, Biblical prayer, tends to bring our minds into harmony and submission to God's will, so that we then increasingly pray for others and for things that harmonize with God's will. We increasingly seek in prayer what God has already committed to provide us in Scripture. Jesus compared our obstacles in life to a sycamore tree. By prayer He assured the disciples that they could move the tree. Scripture enriches our expectations from prayer; it doesn't diminish them. When did you last pray a "tree-moving" prayer?

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Worship service each Sunday      10:30 A. M.  
Joseph R. Holder                      Pastor