

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Daniel: a Man of Impeccable Character

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. (Daniel 6:1-5)

At this stage in Daniel's life, we would likely consider him well into or approaching "senior citizen" status. From sometime, likely around his mid-teens, Daniel has lived in Babylon. Although the world has a way of wearing the Christian down over time, Daniel has maintained his strong faith and a lifestyle that honors that faith. Our passage describes an interesting form of bureaucracy set up by Darius by which he designed to manage the empire. Daniel is one of three "presidents," apparently the leader in this elite group. In a world that operates on human pride jealousy can be vicious. The equivalent of Daniel's position might be that of a vice-president or high official in Congress in our own country's government. Instead of playing the artificial and posturing game of politics, or his membership in a particular political party, the passage describes Daniel in terms of the "...excellent spirit..." that was in him. His integrity earned the king's respect far more comfortably than the political posturing that his peers pursued. Hungry for power and seeing Daniel as standing in their way, these men started looking for a weakness with which they could scandalize Daniel and compromise his position of influence and favor with the king. Despite their best snooping, they could find no weakness or character flaw with which they could neutralize Daniel in the eyes of the king.

We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. What a testimony! Daniel's critics knew that he did not worship their pagan gods. Despite a lifetime away from his beloved Jerusalem and the pervasive worship of God that was common there, Daniel had maintained his faith so that he was known in Babylon's highest circles of influence for his faithfulness.¹

So dreadfully often, professing Christians seem to build their lives around a distinct double standard. They live a Sunday life around church and believers, but they live quite a different lifestyle in their workplace on Monday through Friday. During my secular career, a business advisor highly recommended an insurance company for one of my clients because the two top officials in this company were devoted Christians. A couple of years later a major claim arose. These two men fiercely deserted their supposed Christian faith and found a highly

S. House of Representatives, a position that routinely put him in contact with dignitaries, not only in our own government, but from many other countries. Late in his life Rep. Rayburn visited the little Primitive Baptist Church that he had known over his lifetime. When the opportunity for members was announced by the pastor, Mr. Rayburn stepped into the aisle, slipped out of his shoes, walked forward and presented himself to this church for membership. Later a news reporter asked Mr. Rayburn why he removed his shoes before walking to the front of the church. Mr. Rayburn replied with a reference to God telling Moses to remove his shoes before approaching the burning bush on Mt. Sinai because he was walking on holy ground. Mr. Rayburn told the reporter that he believed in joining this church he was treading on holy ground. A few years later President John Kennedy, Vice-President Lyndon Johnson, and many other government officials sat in that same Primitive Baptist Church to hear the pastor preach Mr. Rayburn's funeral. God may not call "many" wise and mighty men, but Scripture does not indicate that He never calls any such men, touching them no less than we common folk with a sense of His glory and of our weakness and dependence on Him.

¹ For several decades, U. S. Representative from Texas Sam Rayburn served as Speaker of the U.

questionable loophole by which they evaded payment of the claim. Their chief underwriter who had issued the policy, not a professing Christian, argued against their decision on grounds that they were acting dishonestly and even contrary to the terms of the policy they had issued. A “Sunday Christian” is a disgrace to Biblical Christianity, in addition to being an unfaithful witness to the faith in his community or workplace.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. (Ephesians 6:1-9)

This passage is one of several in which Paul applies Christian ethics to every aspect of a believer's life. Paul knew nothing of a compartmentalized Christian life that practices one ethical set of values in church on Sundays and another contradictory set of ethics on “sindays,” Monday through Friday. Although we do not live in a culture that accepts slavery, the employer-employee relationship in our culture should be viewed as a logical and ethical equivalent in our world. Rather than doing as little as possible in the workplace, we should respect our employer and work faithfully for him, as if we were working for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. If we happen to be managers or supervisors in our work assignment, we should likewise treat our employees with the same grace. Paul makes this point in the companion passage that he writes to the Colossians.

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. (Colossians 4:1)

What changes might appear in your workplace if both managers and employees followed Paul's instructions in these passages? What changes

would you make in your personal work habits? Daniel refused to allow the pagan world in which he lived, or the dazzle of palace life to compromise his faith? Clearly he was well known for his faith. His critics readily acknowledged that their only means of bringing him down would be through his different faith. Create a political situation that would require him to compromise his faith. What does this say about Daniel's reputation? They well knew that Daniel was uncompromising in his faith. They could defeat Daniel by convincing the king to command a form of worship that would force Daniel to contradict his faith or break the king's law. There was nothing else in Daniel's life that they could exploit to diminish him in the eyes of the king.

Not only does the New Testament apply Christian principles to believers, it also applies those same rules to men in leadership in churches. Notice Paul's list of qualifications for both the office of minister and of deacon.

Of ministers Paul writes.

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:7)

“...them which are without...” refers to anyone in the community of the man's life outside the church. For example, if Paul managed his tent-making business in an unscrupulous manner, he could not have any influence on business associates toward his faith. A man who builds a compromised reputation in his non-church life fails this qualification for the ministry.

Of deacons Paul writes.

And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. (1 Timothy 3:10)

It is my belief that the qualifications for both minister and deacon must be demonstrated to the full satisfaction of the whole church community before setting a man apart to either office. You don't ordain a man to either office on probation and later evaluate his performance and/or qualifications. He must demonstrate a lifestyle that qualifies under these New Testament qualities, or he should not be ordained. I wholly reject the occasional notion that no man alive today meets these qualifications, so we should just ignore them and ordain men whom we like to these offices, even if they knowingly fail some of the qualifications. Daniel's model conduct in the palace provides us with an up close and personal view of the importance, the necessity, of such conduct for men in leadership positions in a New Testament church; indeed for all in the church.

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
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Worship service each Sunday	10:30 A. M.
Joseph R. Holder	Pastor