

The Envy of the Mighty Plots the End of the Righteous

Daniel 6:1-10; Proverbs 27:4

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Conspiracy in high places against the righteous is not new to this day and age. Joseph was enslaved and sent to Egypt by way of an evil conspiracy of his brothers. David endured the conspiracy of his own son, Absalom, who sought the throne of Israel. There was a conspiracy among the priests and prophets of Israel to overturn the religion and worship which God instituted at the time of Jeremiah. The Jews in Jerusalem sought to kill Paul by way of a secret conspiracy. The ultimate conspiracy was plotted by the Jewish religious leaders together with Judas Iscariot against the Lord Jesus to destroy Him.

If conspiracies abounded against the godly throughout Scripture, are we who follow in the footsteps of Christ and His faithful servants from the past to expect that we will be exempt from the conspiracies of the wicked in high places today? They lay awake at night plotting to overcome Christ and His faithful followers (Proverbs 4:16).

We should neither hide our head in the sand nor be consumed by the conspiracies of the wicked. We need not fear the conspiracies of the wicked, for the Lord will bring their conspiracies into the light and will cause their conspiracies to fall upon their own heads (Psalm 57:6; Psalm 33:10-11). The Lord laughs at their conspiracies (Psalm 2:1-5).

It is easy to panic over the conspiracies of the wicked even to the neglect of our own communion with Jesus, our King (it's easy to spend more time on conspiracies than in the Word and prayer). When Daniel faced the conspiracy of the wicked against him, he did not run in panic, but rather found the peace and power of God to face that conspiracy through his prayer and communion with the Almighty.

The main points from our text today are: (1) Daniel's Faithfulness Sets the Stage for a Conspiracy (Daniel 6:1-3); (2) The Envy of the Conspirators Sets the Plan into Motion (Daniel 6:4-9); (3) The Conspiracy Reveals Daniel's Loyalty to the Lord (Daniel 6:10).

I. Daniel's Faithfulness Sets the Stage for a Conspiracy (Daniel 6:1-3).

A. We were just introduced to Darius the Mede in Daniel 5:31.

1. He was likely appointed by Cyrus (Persian) to be a Median counterpart to rule over the former kingdom of Babylon soon after the conquest of Babylon (537/538 B.C.). This Darius is likely the same person that the historian Xenophon called Gorbyras.

2. In setting up the rule of the Medes and the Persians over the Babylonian kingdom, Darius appointed 120 princes to rule under him. They reported to three presidents (likewise appointed by Darius) who reported to Darius. "Among whom Daniel was first" is better translated "Among whom Daniel was one" i.e. one of the three. Daniel was not yet the first president, but that was Darius' plan (Daniel 6:3).

B. The plan of Darius to promote Daniel was based upon the faithfulness of Daniel in exercising the duties given to him.

1. You'll recall that Daniel was the head of the kingdom of Babylon when the city was taken by Cyrus (Daniel 5:29-30).

2. Daniel proved himself faithful under the Babylonian kings and was promoted, and likewise under the kings of the Medes and the Persians. Even heathen kings saw the benefit to themselves to have such a faithful, honest man of integrity serving them. Darius could not deny the diligence, faithfulness,

and excellence of the work that Daniel did (as did Joseph—faithful when lowly, faithful when exalted—faithful in little, faithful in much). Daniel was at this point an old man (about 85 years old). Diligence and faithfulness was his character before God and man.

3. Don't despise or minimize the work you do, no matter how lowly it may seem. Learn from your youth to do a good job at whatever you are given—don't be sloppy—don't be careless—don't be dishonest in the job you do. Don't just please men; please God (Ephesians 6:6). Learn diligence and faithfulness in all that you do. God will bless you.

II. The Envy of the Conspirators Sets the Plan into Motion (Daniel 6:4-9).

A. The other two presidents and the princes had likely heard that Darius planned to promote Daniel and to set him over the kingdom, and they were not about to allow that to happen if they could prevent it. They envied the gifts and graces of Daniel. Envy is a great sin against God and man (Proverbs 27:4). Why is envy considered a more grievous sin than one who is filled with anger? Let's consider what envy is.

1. **Jealousy** is possessive and selfishly does not want to share what it has with others ("It's mine. You can't have it.").

2. **Covetousness** sinfully desires what belongs to others and will not be content until it has it ("I've got to have it. I will not be content until I have it.").

3. **Envy** not only desires what belongs to others, but goes beyond that to hate them for what they have (gifts, graces, successes, possessions, promotions, family), and to wish, speak, or act to destroy others in order to gain what they have ("If I can't have it, you're not going to have it"—Mark 15:10). Charity (*agape*—the love of Christ) "envieth not" (1 Corinthians 13:4).

4. **Covetousness** merely consumes oneself. **Envy** consumes others and devours others—it's cannibalistic (Galatians 5:14-15). That's revolting!

B. These conspirators not only hated Daniel, they envied him and wanted to destroy him. They envied his excellent spirit and his exaltation.

1. After all, he was not a Mede or a Persian, but a lowly Jew; and he didn't even worship the gods of the Medes and Persians.

2. The faithfulness and promotion of Daniel was a threat to the wicked—Daniel must be destroyed. Faithful Christians are always a threat to the agenda of the wicked—therefore conspiracies to get rid of them. Why? Faithful Christians will serve King Jesus supremely over all rulers (they will not be their programmed robots). Faithful Christians will honor God's holy commandments over the whims of popular culture and over man-made laws that violate God's law. Faithful Christians proclaim an exclusive Jesus, gospel, and truth as the only way, truth, and life to the Father. Faithful Christians will not follow the multitude to do evil. That is why faithful Christians are a threat to the wicked and why they must be neutralized/removed. Ahab call Elijah a troublemaker (1 Kings 18:17).

C. The wicked presidents and princes thoroughly examined all of Daniel's duties/relationships related to his work (Daniel 6:4).

1. They did not leave any stone unturned. They followed up on all leads, for they were desperate to find something for which they could accuse Daniel. But Daniel was so honest, so faithful, and so fair and good to people, even his enemies that hated him could find nothing (Titus 2:7-8). This is a work of God's grace, not mere human exertion.

2. What would turn up in our lives if we were to be so thoroughly examined by those who hate us? What would they find about us from talking with our family members, friends, co-workers? Most importantly, what does God Himself hear and see in our lives? This is not intended to simply make us feel bad, but to drive us to Christ.

D. These wicked conspirators know that the only place that they might accuse Daniel would be in matters related to God's holy law, for they knew that Daniel would rather suffer the loss of all things (even his own life) in order to be faithful to the Lord and His commandments (Daniel 6:5). Daniel was a faithful witness for God—he did not hide it.

1. They conspire together to bring to King Darius a wicked man-made law that would surely ensnare Daniel so that they might be done with him forever (Daniel 6:6).

2. The law is stated in Daniel 6:7. No prayers or petitions are to be made to anyone's god or to any person except to the king for 30 days (treating him as a god). Here was a law that would accomplish two objectives: (1) It would flatter the king and put them in the favor and good graces of the king so as to be promoted once Daniel was gone; (2) It would bring Daniel under condemnation and death in the lions' den. No doubt, they thought this was the perfect conspiracy. It would obtain the favor of the king through flattery and it would do away with Daniel.

3. Moreover, if the king signed it, there would be no way to revoke it, for such was the permanence of the laws of the Medes and the Persians (Daniel 6:8). Even the king himself was not able to revoke the law once he signed it—there was no court of appeal. Only God's Moral Law is truly irrevocable, for His Law reflects the unchangeable righteousness of God. That is why His Law is the standard for our laws.

4. The king signed it and it became the irrevocable law of the Medes/Persians (Daniel 6:9).

III. The Conspiracy Reveals Daniel's Loyalty to the Lord (Daniel 6:10).

A. Once Daniel learns that this decree is signed by the king, he doesn't go into a hidden room to pray, or change his posture to sitting in prayer and turning his face away from the window to avoid detection, or discontinue praying out of submission to the king's decree.

1. Daniel most likely knew that this law was framed by those who hated him, and they were moved by envy to destroy him (though it encompassed all people in their false religions to do the same—false religions would not have a problem with complying because the king claimed a divine authority).

2. If Daniel changed his ordinary worship practice in the least, it would mean that he had done so out of fear of man and the consequences that he would suffer—His testimony for the Lord would have been destroyed (not that changing the place where he prayed or the posture that he used in prayer would be sinful in itself).

3. Thus, Daniel refused to comply with the decree of the king because the decree of the King of kings was of supreme authority, and a prohibition against the worship of God must be disobeyed. Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God (John Knox).

B. Daniel did not gather the Jews together and publicly protest against this unlawful decree. He did not immediately march into the throne room of the king and testify against this law.

1. He might have done so, and would not have acted contrary to what other prophets did who testified before kings (like Elijah before Ahab, or Moses before Pharaoh). Rather he privately refused to comply with the decree even though he knew the consequences that would follow. This helps us to understand that there are various ways to protest against and to resist tyranny. Resistance to tyranny may simply be an unwillingness to obey unlawful commands.

2. In certain situations it is even lawful to flee from tyranny and persecution (Matthew 10:23). For faithful ministers, such fleeing must not be out of fear for one's life. Fleeing must not be interpreted as forsaking the sheep, but rather as moving elsewhere to minister to the sheep (John 10:12-13). A characteristic of a hireling is that he flees when danger comes; whereas the faithful shepherd will minister to the sheep even in the midst of danger.

3. Just as the Good Shepherd (Jesus) did not flee and abandon the sheep during His suffering (and will not do so now), so a faithful shepherd of Jesus Christ will not flee and abandon his sheep in

the midst of suffering. If he removes himself from one location to another, it is in order to better serve the sheep in another location. What a deplorable testimony it is for the shepherd to abandon the sheep so that the sheep can bear the consequences of a faithful testimony for Christ. That a faithful shepherd cannot do. We are covenanted together. We are bound together in the bonds of Christ's love.

4. Daniel did not abandon Christ or Christ's testimony or Christ's sheep in this conspiracy even though it meant the lions' den. God help us to be faithful to the Lord Jesus even unto death.

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