

Daniel 6 • Daniel in the den of lions

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

We are in Daniel, the book of Daniel. So, open your bibles there, please to Daniel chapter 6. We're going to continue our study tonight here in Daniel. What a great chapter, I mean, when you think about probably some of the, well, the most well-known Bibles stories of all time, I would have to say that Daniel and the lion's den probably ranks right up there, maybe in the top 5. You have Noah's Ark and I, of course, I remember all these stories as a kid. They certainly have a more significant meaning to me now than they did then. But there's actually quite a lot to this chapter.

And I, the reason I think this chapter is an important one for us to go over and to study, is because we are increasingly finding in the nation in which we live, challenges to our faith. And the temptation to compromise is becoming ever stronger. Have you ever stopped to think about what, how you would react if you were told you couldn't worship publicly anymore, you couldn't go to church, you couldn't pray.

They didn't want you to pray or to speak in the name of Jesus to anyone any longer. I remember talking about these things 10, 15, 20 years ago and they seemed a lot more far off in the distance back then than they do today. We are, it is a different world than it was just 10 years ago, or 15 years ago, certainly 20 years ago. And so I think there's a lot in this chapter that we need to look at to help us to prepare our hearts and minds. So let's just pray quickly.

Father, as we come before you this evening and spend some time in the word, we pray for your Holy Spirit to lead and guide us because Lord, these are important words and I think that there's something that is very pertinent to the world in which we live today. And we need to harken to these words, Lord, and have a heart of understanding as it relates to the preparation of our hearts and minds to live in a world that is increasingly hostile to your word, to worshipping the one true God, to declaring your truth.

So Father, use this time tonight, we pray, speak to every heart. You know where everyone is at, Lord, and settle those in their hearts who have become fearful of the days in which we live. Lord I remember so many times in the scriptures you said, don't let your hearts be troubled, and we need to take that seriously, especially now.

Help us, we pray, to do just that, to put our hope in you. We ask it in Jesus name, amen. Amen.

Daniel chapter 6 in verse 1, it begins by saying, the first 3 words here in the ESV is, "*It pleased Darius...*" (ESV) Now I got to stop you there just for a moment before we read on, because I need to begin by addressing a fact, and this is an important fact. Secular history doesn't know anything about a king named Darius. You need to know that. And even though it is well aware of kings like Nebuchadnezzar, kings like Belshazzar, and king Cyrus of course, it knows nothing of a king named Darius. And last week as we were going through the previous chapter, I shared with you that there are many Bible teachers and scholars who believe that king Cyrus and king Darius are in fact the same man.

And that's certainly something that could be possible given the fact that many of the kings did have more than one name, and it is even more plausible in this sort of a situation because of the fact that this man is the king of a Medo-Persian empire and that means it's a conglomeration, a unification, if you will, of the Medes and the Persians. Basically, what we're talking about is modern day Iran today.

But given the fact that you have two kingdoms that have come together, joined together, it's not it's not implausible at all to think that this could be the same man, Darius and Cyrus. I've often or I've as well, I've heard some theories that because of the fact that when the Medes and the Persians took over Babylon, and because of the fact that Babylon was not the capital of the Medo-Persian empire, that it's also reasonable to believe that Cyrus, king Cyrus, who we know invaded Babylon for the Medes and Persians put someone else in charge of just Babylon, maybe even made him ruler over Babylon. It's possible that this could be this individual named Darius.

It's also possible that Darius isn't even a name. It's possible that it's a title, because the word Darius, or the title Darius means "one who holds the scepter." So it is, there's all kinds of possibilities. But I'll tell you one thing, it doesn't bother me at all that secular history doesn't know of this man named Darius.

First of all we know so little about some of these ancient things and just about the time we start worrying about it, some other, some archeological dig comes along and brings things to light that we had no knowledge of previously. But anyway, I wanted to just make sure that you are aware of that.

But we're told here that, *"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them (over those 120 individuals, he had) three high officials, (or if you will, governors) of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss."*

And you know what, this is fairly wise leadership. We see here that king Darius is a wise leader. If in fact, this is the same man as king Cyrus then he would've been a conqueror and a good leader because not every conquering king was a good leader. Some kings were great at conquering and they could go into an area and they could muster a military force to come and take over an entire kingdom that belong to someone else.

But then they sit down and they begin to rule and we find out very quickly that they're not very good at leading, they were great at conquering. And we see that today, even in our political system. We find that there are some people who are great campaigners and wonderful debaters and they just ran a great campaign. And everybody just got all excited and all lathered up about this person and they win the election and they get into their political office and we find out they're really kind of a lousy leader. But they were a great campaigner, I mean, you see that thing in church splits frankly, too.

Thank God we've never experienced that sort of a thing here at Calvary Chapel in 31 years. But, some people are great at conquering, but not at leading. And some people might actually convince a bunch of folks in a church to follow after them to a new location, and then they get there and then you find out that they don't know the first thing about leading a church.

So, this is sort of a common sort of thing but we see in this situation that this guy was a good leader. He had 120 of these individuals called "satraps" who were given some area of rule over the area of Babylon or the kingdom, and then these governors that were over them and there were just 3 of these leaders or governors. And we're told the reason why they were put into place, *"so that the king might suffer no loss."* And that basically means, they were to make sure that everything was going in the favor of the king and somebody wasn't absconding with funds or making stupid decisions or something like that.

Now, in verse 3, we're told that, *"Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned (notice, had not done so yet, but planned) to set him over the whole kingdom."*

So the king is now thinking of bringing Daniel into this place above 1 of the 3 governors, and to make him in charge of all of the officials of the king. So in other words, it's basically saying he would be like second to the king. Oh, that's a pretty big promotion when you stop and think about it. And by the way, you need to know that Daniel at this time was probably in his 80s, so he's been serving the Lord faithfully for a long time.

There are some Bible scholars who believe that he was in his upper 80s by this time. So here's a man who's still very busy, still very active, serving the Lord in a pagan kingdom, in a pagan kingdom. Now, that's interesting, isn't it? And that's worthy of our consideration for a moment.

I know a lot of people because I hear from a lot of people who will talk about their circumstances or their surroundings, maybe their job, where they work, the people they work with, and they'll say, these people are so ungodly, I just can't stand to be around them, and I want to get out of here. I want to go do something else, I get that. I understand the impact that it can have on you to work around all day unbelievers who are constantly using foul obscene language, who are talking about worldly things.

I got a note from somebody just today that was kind of lamenting that sort of a situation. This person was writing me from England and was saying that they, it was a fairly young person, and they were attending a school that was very, ungodly and this person was saying, "I want to be an influence, but I just keep getting influenced myself by all the other things going on."

We can't escape living in the world, we can't escape being around unbelievers. We're not called to a monastic lifestyle where we abandon all society and we go up and live in the hills and never see anyone. The thing that impresses me about Daniel, here he is, a man in his 80s. He's been in the Persian kingdom much longer than he ever lived in the southern kingdom of Judah and he is a godly man who continues to influence the people of his surroundings, but he continues to be willing to simply be who God has called him to be in the midst of ungodliness. And that's significant, and I think that's a lesson in and of itself.

Now we find out more about Daniel in verse 4 when it says, "*Then the high officials and the satraps...*" So that means, so it's not just the governors, these other 2 governors, but possibly involved with another 120 of these satraps.

It says, "⁴...sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but (very important word there) *they could find no ground for*

complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him."

Now I need to also stop you right here and tell you that this does not mean in any way that Daniel was a perfect man, doesn't mean that at all. He was a man just like you or me. But what we're told here is that his actions were faithful to the Lord. His words were faithful to the Lord in such a way that his enemies couldn't find a foothold for accusation. They couldn't find a reason for accusation as it relates to bringing something against him that would somehow besmirch his reputation with the king. And you'll notice that they admitted as much.

Look at verse 5, it says, *"Then these men said, 'We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.'"* This is a pretty amazing testimony of an 80 something year old man living in a pagan kingdom among a lot of pagans. And yet he has lived his life in such a way that they clearly admit here that we're, we are not going to find any ground for an accusation against him. And if we're going to accuse him of anything, it's going to have to be connected to his God. We're going to have to find some way to make him look bad related to his God, that's what we're going to have to do.

Obviously, this whole attitude among all these people is based in jealousy and pride. A terrible thing, terrible thing. Isn't it interesting too that they see Daniel, they see a man who's excellent. But rather than seeing that excellence as an example and saying, look how this man has been exalted and promoted in the kingdom and saying to themselves, you know what? I'm going to try to be excellent like Daniel. Did you notice that doesn't seem to even enter into their minds, it doesn't even seem to enter into the equation.

The only way that they can feel any sort of a way to deal with this man Daniel, is by accusing him of something against the kingdom and finding it related to, his walk with God. And that's a really sad place to be. I mean, when you come to the place, when you find yourself in a place where the only way you can advance yourself, is by denigrating others, you're in a really sad place, and that's where they are.

Of course, we see this in politics all the time. We call it "slinging mud" and it's really interesting, isn't it? I appreciate those rare occasions when you see a politician who's campaigning for office, who talks about what they believe rather than putting down what their opponent believes, you know what I mean? Or making some accusation about their opponent's character or past or

something they said 20 years ago. Man, I'm glad people don't try to bring up stuff I said 20 years ago, or 30 years ago, or 40 years ago. Goodness gracious, they could fry me on a skillet, if they looked far enough into my background. When I think about this man, Daniel, who was blameless, and I think to myself, good, I wish that I could have that title given to me, "somebody who was blameless."

Just yesterday I was kind of a stinker down at the bank. I had to go down to the bank and I had an appointment. I had to wait several days for this appointment, anyway, because they're so short staffed at all the banks. And I finally got in to do my thing and I sat there for a half hour while we tried to work things out. And I was finally told we couldn't work things out because we didn't have the right information. So, I ran back to the church to get the information and this was church business. And I ran back there and the guy I was meeting with, who was the only guy to meet with was now with another person.

So, I just kind of slipped in quietly and just said, here's the information you need, I got to go to a meeting, and why don't you get this started and I'll come back later. And he says, "that's not the way it works, I can't do it that way." And I said, okay, well then when can I come back? And he goes, "I don't know."

And I just got frustrated, and I just kind of walked out. I was just I shrugged my shoulders and I walked out and I was instantly convicted for kind of being a stinker. I ended up getting back with a guy at about 2:00pm in the afternoon and I apologized. But then I'm reading about Daniel who was blameless, and I'm going, that isn't me.

Anyway, so these individuals know that there is just going to be one area where Daniel, they're going to be able to get at Daniel. And do you know how, you know why they think that this is an area where they're going to be able to get at Daniel? This thing related to his God, do you know why? It's because they knew that Daniel wouldn't compromise, that's why.

They weren't just attacking him because he was a believer in the one true God, They were attacking him because they knew he was faithful to God. Here's how it goes.

Verse 6, *"Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king (in other words, they came together and made an agreement, a pact, if you will, to go to the king) and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! (that's just what you said when you approached a king) ⁷ All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are*

agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, (we call it mandates today) that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions."

Well, speaking of lying, notice that they say in the beginning here, *"that all the satraps and officials are in agreement."* Well, there's one who wasn't, who, in fact, he wasn't even told about it, and that was Daniel. So they come to the king together and they present this idea to the king, and you got to know that this is going to appeal to the king because it's one of those things that is a potentially unifying sort of an idea.

Remember now, that the Medo-Persian empire had conquered many nations, and these people were difficult to bring together. And so, anything that these leaders could suggest to bring the people onto the same page, even if it's religiously, it's probably going to sound like a good idea. It's a unifying theme. It's like, king, what do you say we bring all these people under a single unifying theme.

Here's what we suggest for the next 30 days, we encourage you to put out a petition, enforcing it as a royal decree, that anyone who prays to another god or man for that matter, should be cast, other than you should be cast into the den of lions.

Verse 8, they say, *"Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked."* ⁹ *Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction."*

Now, this was something that was very interesting about the Medo-Persian empire. They had a law, and that law said that whenever any law or injunction or rule was handed down by royal decree, it could not, it would stand, regardless, could not be rescinded or revoked in any way, even by the king. Now, the reason for this is because they were pagans and they believed that the king was directed by the gods and the gods can't be wrong. So if the king makes a royal decree, this is the gods making a royal decree. And obviously you can't overrule the gods, so, these things cannot be overruled. But you know what else is really interesting about this?

Do you remember that when Nebuchadnezzar was shown that statue of the successive kingdoms that would come after him, he was that head of gold, remember? And then the next kingdom was the of the statue was silver, which is less in quality and so forth, less in glory. Nebuchadnezzar would never have

allowed a rule in his kingdom that he couldn't overrule, you know why? He was the man and he could make any rule he wanted and he could overrule any rule he wanted, including his own rule.

But that wasn't the case with the Medo-Persian empire, this is the silver kingdom, there's a little bit less authority with the king. He's still king, but there's just less. So, this is one of those things where all these officials understand that they can get the king if they can get the king to do something against Daniel, there's really nothing that can be done in his favor.

So verse 10, it says, *“When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, (again, proves that he had not been in on any of this) he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, (these are very important words, the last words) “as he had done previously.”*

So people, I want you to think about this for a minute because a decree has just gone out saying if you pray to any other deity or man in the next 30 days, you will die. I mean, Daniel would've known what it meant to be thrown into the den of lions, you will die. So his life is on the line. I want you to notice it doesn't change his practice at all. And this is why I asked the question, if your life was on the line concerning something you do in your regular discipline of walking with the Lord, whether it's praying, going to church, speaking freely, according to the great commission we've received from the Lord or whatever it may be. If that was now punishable by death, would it change how you act? Would it change your routine?

We can see here that it didn't change Daniel's. And we'll talk more about this, but what's really important to me, is that Daniel determined in his heart and mind that even though there was a danger, he believed that the safest place to remain was in his obedience to God. Did you hear that? Even though there was an external danger, he believed that the safest place to be was in obedience to God.

Because you see, when Daniel looked at the possibility of death alongside what would certainly be another death, please understand people, if he would've stopped praying like he had been doing all this time, that part of his life for that however long would've died. Do you understand that when he considered the loss, there were two losses that he was considering here. One was a loss of his physical life alongside the loss of his intimacy and relationship with God, he

determined that it was more of a loss to give up his walk with God. You with me?

So if you are being threatened with a loss of your life, how would you judge that compared to the things that you're being asked to give up? Would that be a greater loss than the loss of your life? Or would the loss of your life be greater than the loss of your freedom? See, that's really kind of what it comes down to and your ability to walk with God.

I mean, Daniel understood that God was the one who was in control ultimately. Anyway, we'll talk about that in just a minute. I want to look though for a moment at what Daniel was doing. I want you to look at his prayer life for just a bit here, if I could. Because we're told here in verse 10 that he went up into his upper chamber, and so he went privately into the place of prayer. In other words, Daniel didn't flaunt his relationship with God or his obedience to God. He didn't go out into the streets and say, "I don't care what the king does or what he says, I'm going to pray, and here I go, oh, gracious, benevolent God," so that everybody could hear him.

He didn't do that, there wasn't any showboating about this whole thing. It says he just did exactly what he had always done. He went into his private chamber and he began to pray. The next thing we're told is that he knelt down, he got on his knees, and by the way, he would he, this is a popular biblical prayer posture. There, there's nothing to say that it's the only prayer posture. I find it funny when people kind of get into that idea that you have to be in a particular posture, in order to pray, which I think is kind of dumb. But there's something significant about being on your knees because it shows humility and it shows dependence.

And those aren't bad things to show in a time of prayer, they're not bad at all. I want you to also notice that as was his usual custom, he prayed 3 times a day, and that meant he probably prayed in the morning right around noon and then sometime in the late afternoon or early evening. So, he was, he had a regular prayer life and you know what I mean by that?

It doesn't have to be 3 times a day, but it was regular, it was regular. When I ask you about your prayer life, would you define your prayer life as regular? Meaning that it's consistent. And then the last thing I want you to notice here, well, actually it's not the last thing, it's the second to the last thing on my list anyway, you'll notice that he prayed with his window open towards Jerusalem.

Now, this wasn't, again, he wasn't showboating, he didn't open up his window just to get... and so that people would notice. There was a very specific reason why Daniel prayed with his window open facing Jerusalem, and it all had to do with a prayer that king Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple. And when the temple was being dedicated, Solomon started talking about, to the Lord, "if the people of Israel ever came to a place of such disobedience that God allowed an enemy to come and take them captive and carry them off to a foreign land." (1 Kings 8:46) And so as Solomon prayed, he said, "Lord, I'm going to ask you today that if those people in that foreign land realize the error of their ways and in repentance, turn to you facing this altar, and they cry out to you to prayer," Solomon said, "hear from heaven as your people call out to you." (1 Kings 8:30)

Daniel was a man of the word and he took seriously that idea of literally facing the altar of God. Even though the temple had long been destroyed, that was the direction of the altar. And he continued to face that direction, out of obedience to the word of God. Let me show you the passage from 1 Kings 8:30, this is Solomon speaking, he said to the Lord,

1 Kings 8:30 (ESV)

"...listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place."

And that's exactly what Daniel was doing. But I want you to also notice here, it says that he prayed and gave thanks to God. Did you see that? Did you see that there at the end of verse 10, he "... *prayed and gave thanks before his God,*"

Now remember what's going on? Things just got really bad in the kingdom and there's a, there's a death sentence now for anybody who prays to anyone other than the king and Daniel is giving thanks. And you think to yourself, what does he have to give thanks for?

You know what, we always have something to give thanks for. That God is there, that God hears our prayers, that God loves us, that He's full of mercy, that He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. Those are all things you can give thanks for, and that should be a part of, a regular part of our prayer.

Let me show you 1 Thessalonians 5:18 on the screen, we are told,

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)

give thanks in (not for), but in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

We are to give thanks in all circumstances. Even when life gets really troublesome, dangerous even. We are to spend time giving thanks, even in those circumstances. It's the will of God that we would be people who are thankful in prayer. These, I don't know, I just think these points of Daniel's prayer life, privately in his upper chamber, knelt to pray, showing that humility, dependence upon God 3 times daily, again, showing consistency in his prayer life. And then with that, praying towards Jerusalem, and that means he was a man of the word and he was praying obediently and he prayed giving thanks.

Those are all just really important things and Daniel could also give thanks because he knew that it wasn't king Darius who was ultimately in charge of his life. It might have seemed like, when a king comes along and makes a decree like, you pray to me during these next 30 days and nobody else, or you're dead. That sounds like he's in control, doesn't it? There's a lot of things in life that make it sound like those things are what are in control.

When the doctor tells you that you, your latest test results came back and they didn't look very good, it was troubling. It sounds like that whatever is going on in your body is in control. If you really, truly understand the sovereignty of God, you understand that's not true. And I believe Daniel understood that it may have seemed like this decree was very real and a very real threat to his safety. It might even seem like some person who's speaking into your heart is also in control of your life, but they are not.

You remember the conversation that Jesus had with Pilate. I love this probably one of my favorite passages in all of the Bible, is Jesus is being accused, vehemently, vigorously by these religious leaders and they're just throwing all these insults at Jesus, and He says nothing.

And Pilate is amazed that He says nothing. And so finally he turns to Jesus, let me show you this on the screen, it's from John chapter 19.

John 19:10-11 (ESV)

So Pilate said to him, "you will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you? Jesus answered him. "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above."

So Pilate said to him, "you will not speak to me? (in other words, you're not going to answer these things?) Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you? (Look at Jesus's response) Jesus answered

him. "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above."

You know that's a truth that we need to take from this place. No matter what in your life is demanding you to pay attention because they're saying, I have authority over you, I have control. I have authority, and you will bow the knee to me. And you come back and you say, you know what, everybody and everything bows the knee to, my God. And His is the final authority and you, or this thing, or this circumstance, or that person, or this organization or that president, or that political person, or whatever would have no authority over me had it not been given them from above.

And that's not cockiness, that's confidence and faith. So it's interesting once again that Daniel didn't let the decree of the king change his routine, not one single bit. Verse 11, *"Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God."* In other words, they found him praying.

So it says, *"¹² Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked."* ¹³ *Then they answered and said before the king, (well you know) "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition (or his prayer) three times a day."*

He's not just thumbing his nose at you once in a while, he thumbs his nose at you oh king, 3 times a day. I want you to notice the response of the king. It says, *"¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed..."* Let me ask you a question, why was he distressed?

The king was distressed because he knew that he'd been manipulated into making a stupid law for the sake of the small minded jealousy of a bunch of people who knew they couldn't measure up to Daniel's character. That's why he was distressed, because he had been drawn into creating this thing. It was unjust, it was dumb, but he did it anyway and now he's stuck.

Now you'll notice as it goes on there, after saying he was distressed, we're told that he *"¹⁴ ... and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him."* Apparently the sentence had to be carried out that same

day before the sun set. And so we're told here that the king labored and we don't, we're not told what he did. It could be that he brought in some of his legal advisors looking for a loophole or something in the Medo-Persian system of justice that might somehow, someway, give him an opportunity to deliver Daniel from this terrible fate. But he couldn't find anything and so right about the time of sunset, it says, *"¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, (now we're just reminding you here king) 'Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.'*" You do remember that right, king?

So he's stuck. *"¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, 'May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!'"* I want you to, we're not going to talk about here just right now, but in a moment I will. I want you to notice how the king though says to Daniel regarding his devotion to God, *"your God, whom you serve continually."* Remember that, okay, tuck that away.

"¹⁷ And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet (meaning his own signal or sign, it was often in a ring or some other sort of thing that they would press into this clay) and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him."

So it's interesting, isn't it, in verse 16 that the king says, *"may your God deliver you."* In other Bible translations, it is actually a little more forceful than that. It's like *"your God will deliver you,"* but at the same time you kind of wonder how much the king really believed that because he went home after they sealed the thing and he didn't sleep all night long.

And whatever usual festivities they would bring to entertain the king in a typical evening were all put aside for the night and were told that no diversions were brought. That means no concubines, no nothing, no court presentation, and were told that he stayed awake all night long.

He couldn't sleep, he spent the night fasting. And then verse 19 says, *"Then, at break of day, (so I mean, the day is just barely dawn, and) the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. (he has no idea what's really is going on here, you can see he's just in anguish) The king declared to Daniel, 'O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, (there's another statement of that) been able to deliver you from the lions?'"*

I read one of my commentaries that said that, he says, “in my mind I have Daniel not saying anything for a good 15 seconds just to make the king really squirm or something.” I'm sure that wasn't the case, but that's the way the thing played in his warped mind. But anyway, I want you to notice again here, now we're going to talk about it. Notice he says, “*O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually,*” and this is the second time now that Darius made reference to Daniel's devotion to God as a continual service, a consistent and continual service to the living God.

Here's my question, how did he know that? I mean, we don't have any records of Daniel inviting the king to a Bible study over at his house or... Daniel was a busy man in the service to the king, and he went about his business, and the king was not the kind of guy you just hung out with. So how did the king know? How did the king know that Daniel served his God continually? Well, he saw it in his character, he saw it in his life. It is a very, very common question that I get from people saying, “how can I witness to my family, they seem so closed.” Well, the first thing I tell them is it's tough to witness to family.

When Jesus went back to Nazareth, He had a hard time. Even Jesus said that, “a prophet is received anywhere but in his own hometown.” (Mark 6:4) Very challenging to witness to family, but that doesn't mean it's impossible. But the thing that I tell people over and over again is, you listen, you've got to live Jesus in front of your family. They got to see it in the way you act, they got to see it in the way you live. They got to see it in your words, not just your words sharing the gospel, your words talking about people, or not talking about people. What you say, what you don't say, your attitude, your confidence, your confidence.

I was sharing with a woman just today, who wrote me and told me that her dad was just diagnosed with a pretty serious cancer. And she said, none of us have much hope for him. And I wrote her back and I said, you're not doing your dad any favors by being discouraged to the point of hopelessness, you don't know what's going to happen, put your faith in God, whatever happens, put your faith in God and show that confidence.

Now, I'm not talking about this confidence that says, you are healed in the name of Jesus and we're just going to claim that and we're going to confess it for the rest of... That's not what we're talking about here. We're not talking about positive confession, that is just ridiculous. We're talking about confidence in God no matter what. Confidence in God, my God is bigger than this situation. I don't know how it's going to play out, but I know this, my God's bigger, my God is able, and we need to show that to people.

And when you're witnessing to family and all the issues of typical family stuff come up, how do they see you responding? Do they see you responding in fear and cowering and, oh no, what are we going to do now. If there's an issue of provision that is in doubt, do they see you ringing your hands, or did they see a confidence, a quiet, peaceful confidence in your life that communicates to them, they're trusting in God. Do you understand? That's how the king knew that Daniel served his God continuously because he saw it in the way Daniel lived his life.

And people can see it in your life too, it's important that they see it in your life. In fact, most of the time, it's important that they see it there first before they hear it coming out of your mouth. Because you know what, anybody, anybody can preach, anybody can say the words. Years ago when I was up in Washington pastoring a church there, I had a guy come into my office and he started preaching to me and he was stone drunk. I mean, the guy was inebriated. He was preaching up a storm. You think I listened to anything he said?

Anybody can preach, can they see it in your life? That's where the rubber meets the road. Verse 21 says, "*Then Daniel said to the king, (probably not after a 15 second pause) 'O king, live forever!'*" (isn't that great? He's not mad at the king) ²² *My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, ...*" Isn't this great? Now, we don't know if Daniel actually saw an angel there in the lion's den, but nevertheless he was convinced that an angel had been sent.

When I was a little kid, we had this big huge children's story book Bible in our home and I remember to this day. I remember very clearly the picture that of Daniel and the lion's den, and it was this very serene picture of Daniel looking very serene and the lions looking very serene. They were kind of sitting around purring and I don't know that's actually true. We're going to find out here at the end of the story that they were, it wasn't because they were like full and they were like, oh, I couldn't eat another bite. That's not what's going on here. What Daniel said was, "the angel of the Lord, he shut their mouths, God sent an angel and he closed their mouths."

So, for all we know, these lions are pacing back and forth like, lions do. Have you ever seen feeding time at the zoo? When they bring..., the lions are hungry and they bring these big hunks of meat and the lions are pacing back and forth, and then they heave these big pieces of meat over there and, but they're just, they're moving back and forth, just waiting for their, for the kill. In this case, it's just already dead, but you know what I mean.

In my mind I wonder if the lions are even showing that kind of desire, but the angel shut their mouths. Pretty cool, thinking about angels, isn't it? I've never seen an angel. What's the role of angels? Look what the writer of Hebrews says on the screen from Hebrews chapter 1, he says,

Hebrews 1:14 (ESV)

Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

That's exactly, well, that's a rhetorical question. The answer is yes, of course. They are ministering spirits, they are sent out to serve God's people. You could have had angels taking care of you without you knowing it. You, and I'm willing to bet you probably have. And Daniel did too, and he was convinced of it.

Anyway, he goes on here in verse 21 to say, “...and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.” And that's Daniel's very polite way of saying, “yes king, I'm guilty of what they charged me with, but I did you no harm. Yes, I prayed, yes, I prayed, but I did you no harm.”

So it tells us in verse 23 that, “Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, (look at these last words, they are critical, they're powerful) because he had trusted in his God.”

What is the key to Daniel being taken care of in the lion's den? “He trusted in his God.” It comes down to faith, doesn't it? It's faith from beginning to end, it's faith. Yeah, Daniel was a good guy, yeah Daniel was blameless, they couldn't find any way to use him. Yeah, Daniel, he was obedient to God, but that wasn't why he got saved, that wasn't why he was spared in the lion's den.

He was spared because “he trusted in his God” and that is what is the key in our lives too. So when the threat comes into your life, are you going to trust in the Lord? Are you going to trust in God's deliverance or are you going to run off and scream your brains out and go, “ah!, we're all going to die” and that sort of thing.

Daniel trusted and it's important that we see that. “²⁴ And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel (he knew exactly what was going on, notice maliciously) were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. (boy, I tell you, you wouldn't want to be their

family) *And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.*”

Which is really kind of a nice way of saying they got ate. They, the lions have this terrible habit of starting to eat before the thing is even dead. I don't know why I brought that up, but it's one of, it was a bad scene, it was a bad scene. This did not turn out well for these men, by the way. But the king knew, he knew exactly. And when you have leaders who try to manipulate and try to control and maliciously accuse, do you want them to be leaders in the kingdom? I mean he, so he does what is really smart, he cleans house.

He's like, I don't want, you guys proved yourselves unworthy to be leaders. You proved yourself unworthy to be leaders because you maliciously accused. I was talking to a pastor, I won't say who, but talking to a pastor in the last year who really went through a rough season with his church, where some of his top leadership maliciously accused him, and I believe it was malicious.

I even spoke to one of them personally, one of the elders. And once they left the church, they went on a communication campaign of calling, emailing everybody in the church and maliciously accusing the pastor. And I said, well that's bad enough and they're going to have to answer to the Lord for that.

But I also looked at the pastor and I said, you do understand, don't you, that they showed by that, that they never should have been in leadership in the first place. They proved that they were disqualified. Why? Because they didn't protect the flock. Jesus told us the good shepherd lays down his life for the flock, and that means even if he's in the wrong, he's going to protect the flock. (John 10:11)

That doesn't mean maliciously accusing the shepherd, that means going away quietly for the sake of the body of Christ. And these men too, under king Darius, they disqualified themselves by their actions and he knew it.

And he knew that the best thing for the kingdom was to get rid of them. But he kind of more than fired them. Verse 25 says, *“Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: “Peace be multiplied to you. ²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. ²⁷ He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.”*

By the way, this is called legislating righteousness and you can't do it, you can't do it. You can't pass a law to say, you will now worship God. I mean, the Romans tried to do that and they got a very corrupt Roman system out of it. Because Rome began by persecuting the church and then when the first Roman emperor became a believer, suddenly it became fashionable to be a Christian. And so people feigned Christianity and so now you had a very shallow Christian church because people felt like to be a Christian was to advance their political career because it had been legislated. There was now a state church.

You can't do that, you can't have a state church. The founding fathers of our nation realized that. They realized you can't have a state church, that's what they were fleeing from in England. And when they came here, they said, we're going to make sure that the government has no power over the church. It's called the separation of church and state, that's been reversed in our lifetime. It is now separation from the church and it has been completely turned around from what our forefathers, our founding fathers originally intended it to be. But they were right, they were right, you can't legislate morality.

You can't legislate worship, you can't legislate obedience to God. You just can't do it. It's nice, it's nice that king Darius said this. I mean, it's cool and all, it's not going to make any big difference, but it's, it's a testimony.

So the chapter ends by saying, “²⁸ *So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*” And again, I'll just tell you that some Bible scholars believe that last verse should read, “So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius. That is the reign of Cyrus the Persian, speaking of the same man.”

Anyway, I wanted to just, I mean, if the lessons aren't clear concerning the book of Daniel I think they probably should be. It's about a life of faith. But let me just say this one other thing about Daniel's prayer life, you don't want to go into the lion's den and try to learn how to pray, that's not the time to learn how to pray.

You want to have a prayer life before those circumstances of life that we call “the lion's den” appear in your life because they will appear, they probably already have, depending on how old you are. And if you're younger, you've got those to look forward to. There's going to be some lion den situations coming in life. So how are you going to face those things? Well, I hope that you have a consistent and regular prayer life established going into that because it's going to make all the difference in the world. You want to be a praying person before you get thrown in the den.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this time tonight spent in the Word. Thank you for this chapter in Daniel. Thank you for the insights we gained from it. Thank you for the lessons. Thank you for the reminders.

Lord, we live in this fallen, broken world and it creates many such circumstances that we could refer to as being liken unto a den of lions. I pray my father, God, that first of all, we would be praying people, establishing our prayer life before those things happen. But secondly, Lord, when we do find ourselves in those kinds of situations, I pray that like Daniel, it would be said of us that he trusted or she trusted in the Lord God. Father, build up our faith, build up our faith. We ask it in Jesus precious name, amen.