

DANIEL: Life in the Lion's Den Daniel 6ⁱ

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! For those of you that are guests, we want to say a special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are excited to have you with us today. And on behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we say welcome you today.

We would love the opportunity to connect with you. You can simply text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you do that, you will be sent a reply text that will have a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you. Again, we would love the opportunity to connect with and to pray for you.

PRAYER MATTER [If Paul and Kay are in Attendance]:

Last week we took time out to pray for a situation that we have learned about regarding one of our Missions Partners, Paul and Kay Newby. I want to ask you to continue to be in prayer for them and to remind you that some of us are praying and fasting this Wednesday, February 23rd from sunrise to sunset. That is the date of the hearing in which we are asking God to work.

Paul and Kay are here with us worshipping this morning. So, I want to invite Paul and Kay to join me up here and for our elders that are in the room to come as well. I want us to lay hands on this incredible couple and pray over them. And I want to ask you, Church Family, when our prayer is voiced, to extend your hand toward them as a sign of your agreement in praying for them.

Paul and Kay, I want you to know how much this church loves you. We believe in your work in Honduras as God's Hand is all over you guys. You are not alone. This body of believers are behind you 1,000%. Robert / Jacob, would you voice our prayer over Paul and Kay this morning? [PRAY].

Thank you, Church Family! While we are on the topic of prayer, I want to remind you about our monthly prayer time that begins next Sunday, February 27 at 8:30am. Donna Pilgrim will be leading that team as we seek to be a praying church.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Yellowstone Old Faithfulⁱⁱ

Yellowstone National Park draws tourists from all over the world. While the park has 500 geysers there is only one of those that draws the greatest crowd, Old Faithful. I've read that about 30,000 people per day watch Old Faithful erupt. But it's neither the biggest nor the most powerful geyser in the park. What makes Old Faithful such an attraction is its regularity. You can count on Old Faithful.

We are drawn to that which we can count, aren't we?! Faithfulness is an attribute in which we are all attracted. And I think that very quality is what draws many to the life of Daniel. National leaders were drawn to him. Talk about faithful. Daniel was consistent in his faith and faithful in his profession. And we learn a lot from his faithfulness in Daniel Chapter 6.

I want to invite you to turn there in your copy of God's Word. We are going to work our way through one of the most famous stories in the Old Testament in a message I've entitled, "Life in the Lion's Den." In our study this morning we are going to see New Authority, False Accusation, and Divine Acclaim. That is the outline of the chapter. And after we look at that, I want to talk about some takeaways, 4 things to remember when you find yourself in the Lion's Den. We all find ourselves in the lion's den from time to time.

MESSAGE:

So, let's first look at...

1) New Authority.

Last week we read about the collapse of Babylon in the story of the handwriting on the wall. So, the Medes and the Persians have now taken control of Babylon and they are setting up a new authority. Read with me verses 1-3 of Daniel 6.

*It pleased **Darius** to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might **suffer no loss**. ³ Then this Daniel became **distinguished above all the other high officials** and satraps, because **an excellent spirit was in him**. And the king planned to **set him over the whole kingdom**.*

Scholars debate over who Darius is that is mentioned in verse 1. The word, "Darius," means lord in the original language. It is possible that when Daniel

calls this king Darius he is actually referring to King Cyrus who is the main ruler over the Medo-Persian empire. However, other scholars believe this to be a man that Cyrus has appointed to rule over the newly acquired province.ⁱⁱⁱ

Now, take this for what you will, but I think this is King Cyrus. Because in verse 3 he plans to set Daniel over the entire kingdom. I wouldn't think that an appointed representative had that kind of authority. But who this Darius is isn't relevant to the story that plays out in Daniel 6.

But we do see the attempt to establish a new authority, a new government. Following the successful capture of a nation, the new ruler gets to work immediately in making things conform to the new nation. So, the setting up of 120 satraps accomplished two goals. One, a new government structure and two, better financial accountability. Verse 2 says the motivation for this was a line of report and the prevention of loss. What was being lost? Tax revenue was being stolen. Cyrus set up his version of the IRS.

In a scenario like this, corruption was more than likely. So, the new king had to depend upon people he trusted. Daniel continues to distinguish himself above everyone else. In his mid-80s he is found to be excellent in all that he did. In other words, he was honest and very capable. As a result, the king planned to give him a promotion that would make him Prime Minister.

If Daniel was 82 at the collapse of Babylon, it would have taken a least a year or two for the king to observe Daniel to be able to come to the conclusion that he was worthy of the highest-ranking administrator of the kingdom. So, think 85 years old. Still serving God and serving others with excellence. I love it!

So, we see the new authority. Secondly, we see...

2) False Accusation.

In an environment where there is a power grab, conditions are right for false accusations. Have you ever been falsely accused of something? That's what happens to Daniel. Read with me beginning in verse 4.

*⁴ Then the high officials and the satraps **sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel** with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was **faithful**, and no error or fault was found in him. ⁵ 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." [In other words, he is not politically corrupt or dishonest, he is faithful. So, the only way we are going to get him is by way of his religion. Verse 6.] ⁶ *Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! **All the high officials of the kingdom**, [Not true. Daniel was not a part of this and he was a high official. False accusations are always covered in lies.] **the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, 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.** ⁸ 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.*

Nebuchadnezzar and the kings of Babylon ruled by way of fear. The Medo-Persian empire was a government of law and order, a completely different set up. As a result, if Daniel's accusers were able to get a law passed, they knew in this new government system, not even the king could go back on the new law. They had worked really hard to be able to back Daniel into a corner.

Now, the proposition was to not allow petitions to be made to any god or man except the king. I think the king was tempted by this proposition because it seemed like a display of loyalty to the new leader. He did not necessarily view himself as a god, but rather that anything supernatural would need to first come through him. So, false accusations of Daniel's day are the same as our day. Lies disguised as benefit.

Look what happens. Verses 13-16. ¹³*Then they answered and said before the king, "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 three times a day.**" ¹⁴Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. ¹⁵Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the 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." ¹⁶Then 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!"*

Daniel's accusers catch him doing what he always did, praying three times a day, and came and told the king. The king, realizing he has been duped, sets

his mind to deliver Daniel. In other words, he started combing the law books to see how he could get Daniel out of this situation. And we know that he stopped the business of the kingdom to do that because he labored until sunset. Then the accusers remind him of the law and the king is forced to toss Daniel in the Lion's Den. I'm going to come back to this in a moment.

We see the new authority and the false accusation. Thirdly, we see...

3) Divine Action.

God meets His servant, Daniel, amid his trial. Read with me verses 19-23.

19Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions.

20As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

21Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm."

23Then 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, because he had trusted in his God.

The king loved Daniel so and he was in such anguish about what happened to him. He wasn't able to sleep and as soon as he could he went to see if Daniel survived. When Daniel replied, the king was exceedingly glad and ordered that Daniel be helped out of the lion's den. Daniel was exonerated and his accusers were thrown into the lion's den and killed.

God worked for the good of His servant. He sent an angel into the lion's den that not only closed the mouths of the lions, but comforted and protected Daniel. The lions didn't even claw at him.

You know, I believe God still meets his people in the lion's den. We all have lion's den moments, don't we? Whether it is a storm in your life that where fear and anxiety has overwhelmed you, or maybe it's a situation that attempts to steal your vigor for Jesus, or a lie that has been told about you so as to bring you harm, or whether it is a lawsuit that threatens to thwart you from your mission, God meets His people in the midst of the Lion's Den. And I think Daniel 6 speaks to us at least 4 things to remember when you find yourself face

to face with a roaring lion. I want to spend the balance of our time working through those 4 things. First, ...

APPLICATION:

1) Remember the Power of a Godly life.

We learn from this passage that Daniel was faithful. Certainly, he was not perfect, but he lived a godly life. And Daniel's life was a testimony. Never underestimate the power of a godly life. I think this story serves as a profound reminder of that. Think about it for a moment.

Number one. This must have been an encouragement to the Jews. Here Daniel is, 70 years removed from his homeland; he and his fellow Jews. When do you think hopelessness set in? Was year 5, year 25 or year 50 when the Jews were tempted to give up hope that God was going to work? Don't you know, though, the stories of Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego and here the story of Daniel and Lion's Den, reminded them that God was at work? This experience, extremely painful and most likely very hurtful for Daniel, must have renewed hope in others. The power of a godly life encourages others.

Number two. Consider the impact Daniel's life had on the king, Darius. I love what he says to Daniel when he is forced to toss him into the Lion's Den. Verse 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!"* Now, how would the king know that God could possibly have delivered Daniel? You know what I think? I think that thought was implanted by Daniel himself when he told the king all about all the ways God worked in his life. I think Darius was praying, "O God, do it again! I've heard what You have done. Do it again!"

You know, a life well-lived can impact much more than just that life. Perhaps for you, there is a grandmother that served God faithfully and her prayers and her testimony has had a profound impact on you. Maybe it was a friend or a co-worker, or a neighbor, or a parent that lived in such a way that it led you to the conclusion that God is good. We all have that person in our life that has had a profound impact on us. Will your life be that person for someone else?

For me, in addition to my parents, it was Dave Bradley. Dave was my Sunday School teacher when I was in high school. You know that man loved me despite my selfishness. He poured into me, taught me, sacrificed for me. He

lived for Jesus in front of me. And much of the reason that I am here today is because he had the audacity to see the call of God on my life long before I thought it possible.

See, it was the testimony of Daniel's life that led king Darius to write what is recorded in verse 26 of Daniel 6. ***26 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear*** [In other words, have the utmost respect] ***before the God of Daniel.***

And the question before us is what is the testimony of our life telling? My life? Never underestimate the power of a godly life. When you are in the Lion's Den, your faithfulness to God in that situation may be building a testimony for many to follow your example. And even if that's the only outcome, it's worth it.

Remember the power of a Godly life. Secondly, ...

2) Remember Faith is Developed not Given.

I believe Daniel's faith here was something that he developed long before the Lion's Den. Before the writing on the Wall. Before he saw Nebuchadnezzar redeemed. Before the interpretation of the dreams. Daniel had walked with the Lord for more than 80 years and as a result knew that God wouldn't fail him. My point is that he learned to trust God way before his trial.

I know so many people that have abandoned their faith because when a trial enters their life, they "try" religion. They hadn't developed their faith, their trust in God, prior to the trial, and so the trial overpowered what little faith they had.

Verses 10 and 11 show us that Daniel invested in the development of his faith. Look at those verses with me. ***10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, 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, as he had done previously.***

Daniel didn't wait until the law had been passed to get down on his knees and pray. No! It's what he always did. He wasn't trying to get caught, he was just doing what he always did. Don't wait until you find yourself in the Lion's Den to start praying, to start building your trust in God.

And I think this is a very practical word to those of us that are parents. Make discipleship a regular priority in your family. Because if we don't, what happens

to our kids when they get thrown into the Lion's Den? And they will! And I'm not talking about just bringing them to church. I think that's very important, please understand. But most kids only spend one or two hours of the week in church. There is far more time for them to be disciplined elsewhere. And here's truth; your children are being disciplined, no question. The question is, who is disciplining them? And what is preparing them for the Lion's Den?

Daniel 6 teaches us to remember the power of a godly life and that faith is developed not given. Thirdly, ...

3) Remember Faithfulness Leads to Deliverance.

This is something that I think is very important here. I want to draw your attention to verse 23 of Daniel 6. ***23 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, because he had trusted in his God.***

Now, it's vitally important for us to correctly understand that phrase. And let me say this, as a rule of thumb. It is dangerous, beloved, to build any theology on just one verse or even a phrase within a verse. Because if we did that, based on Jesus's emphasis in dealing with sin by way of plucking out eyes and cutting off hands, we would all be blind and have no hands! When it comes to accurate hermeneutics, we have to let Scripture interpret Scripture.

And when it comes to this verse, it is easy to say that Daniel was delivered *because* of his faith in God and therefore God will always deliver us from any situation if we just have enough faith. But that's not always the case throughout Scripture! And what about Christians all over the world that are being killed for their faith? Are they not trusting in God?

So, let's apply the Scripture interpreting Scripture idea to this verse. Look at Hebrews 11:36-38. Now, before I read it, you will recognize Hebrews 11 as the Hall of Faith. This is where many Bible characters are celebrated for their faith and the ways God worked in their lives. But then you come to verse 36.

36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword.

They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated,

38 of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

These unnamed others were not delivered from their affliction. They had just as much faith, you see. Philip was tortured, impaled, and hung for preaching the gospel, but Peter, Paul and Silas were delivered from prison. All were faithful servants. Some were delivered and some were not.

We serve a God that is able to intervene and rescue us from any affliction. But sometimes He doesn't. And I don't know why God does what He does. But one thing I do know. He will deliver us. It may not be in this lifetime, or it may not be from your trial, but ultimately God has provided something better. That at the end of our lives, those in Christ Jesus, will be delivered ultimately from sin, death and the grave and enjoy life eternal with Almighty God in Glory.

Whatever it is that you are facing in your life, a Lion's Den, you need to remember that God will ultimately deliver. And whether we face the fiery furnace or the roaring lion, we are in the Lord's care, and He will work out His divine purposes for His glory.^{iv} The victory is ours in Christ. And while that may not always mean that the current situation will be made better, it does mean that God will use it. So, trust that.

Remember the power of a godly life, that faith is developed not given, and that there will be ultimate deliverance. Finally, ...

4) Persecution Should be Expected.

Listen, if you live for Jesus, not only will heaven notice, but so will hell. Life isn't fair, so we should expect persecution if we live for Jesus.

These punks were looking to sidetrack Daniel. And they knew the only way they were going to get him was by way of spiritual attack. Look at verses 4 and 5. *⁴ Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. ⁵ 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."* That's spiritual attack.

What I like about this is that Daniel's faith was so evident that they knew they could always get him there. And that begs a question of me. Would someone know I'm a Christian by their observance of me? Is it obvious by the way I live

and the words on my mouth that I love and follow Jesus? Amen or ouch? Sometimes people will attack us just because we love Jesus.

The English Puritan church leader, Richard Baxter, once said, "God's people should be more concerned that they deserved the persecution than that they be delivered from it, because deserving it would be evidence of their faithfulness to the Lord." Wow! That's a challenging statement.

One last thought here in terms of practical application. As Christians, we are to obey the laws of the land. We are called to be model citizens.^v The exception to that is when the laws of the land contradict the laws of God. Verse 10 says that Daniel knew that the law had been issued, but he prayed anyway. It is important to note that Daniel did not pray out of defiance. He prayed everyday out of his devotion to God, every day, three times a day, and nothing was going to keep him from his relationship with God.

I can think of another example where God's people openly continued despite a command to be silent. In Acts 4 and 5, Peter and John were told by leaders not to preach the name of Jesus. To that decree, Acts 5:29 says, *"²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."*

Let me give you a very practical example of how this plays out. We have missionaries that serve all over the world, and they do so in closed countries. A closed country is one where it is illegal to share Jesus. Those missionaries are charged with a higher command than that of the laws of men. The Great Commissions says, *"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..."* Praise God we live in the country we live in. But there may come a day, even in our land, when a law is passed, that contradicts the Law of God that we say, "We choose to obey God rather than men no matter what that might cost us."

CONCLUSION:

As we conclude here this morning, I want to ask the band to come back up and lead us in a time of response. As they come, I want to ask you to consider how The Lord is stirring in your heart.

Daniel surrendered his life to The Lord. Have you trusted Jesus? [Gospel!]

Are you in the midst of the lion's den? Come and allow our elder to pray.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: Travis Agnew, “*Daniel [Series Overview]*”, article published on travisagnew.org on August 13, 2020; Stephen R. Miller, *The New American Commentary: Daniel*, B&H Publishing, Nashville, 1994; Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Resolute: OT Commentary on Daniel*, David C Cook Publishing, 2000; Troy Rackliffe, “*Daniel part 7*,” preached at Glade Community Church in Daniels, WV, October 2020; Mark Driscoll, “*Kingdom Down #6: The Lion of the Tribe of Judah & The Lion’s Den*” accessed at: <https://realfaith.com/sermon-series/kingdom-down/> February 15, 2022; Skip Heitzig, “*I Dare You: Be Steadfast*,” taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, February 24, 2013. Skip Heitzig, “*I Dare You: Be Faithful*,” taught at Calvary Church Albuquerque on Sunday, March 3, 2013. Gene Whithurst, “*The Book of Daniel Commentary*,” document sent to me via Gene.

ⁱⁱ Dina Mishev, “*The Washington Post: The Yellowstone geyser and its surroundings are worth a visit*,” article published October 12, 2018.

ⁱⁱⁱ Further discussion on this can be found at Got Questions: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Darius-in-the-Bible.html>

^{iv} Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Resolute: OT Commentary on Daniel*, David C Cook Publishing, 2000, page 101.

^v This point was highlighted by my mentor, Troy Rackliffe, in his sermon, “*Daniel Part 7*.”