

Daniel 6

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Preacher: Arthur Jackson

[0 : 0 0] over the kingdom 120 satraps to be throughout the whole kingdom, 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. 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. 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. 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. 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, 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. 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. Therefore, King Darius signed the document and injunction. 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. Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. 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.

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 that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day. Then 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. Then 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. 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. And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting. No diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him. Then at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions.

As 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? Then Daniel said to the king, O king, live forever. 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. 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. And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions, they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied to you. 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. He delivers and rescues. He works wonders and signs in heaven and on earth. He who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. This is the word of the Lord.

[4 : 48] Good morning to the people of God. It is good to be here with you. Good to be able to come to God's word with open heart. And praise God, I get to open my mouth to share with you what God's word has to say to us. Let's pray and then we'll get into God's word. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for he is good.

His mercy endures forever. For that mercy we praise you and its evidence with us today. Blessed be your name. Amen. For most of us here this morning, our acquaintance with the book of Daniel begins with the story that we come to in our text. What a beloved story it is. If you didn't know anything else about the Daniel of scripture, you likely know that he is associated with the lion's den.

According to educator E.D. Hirsch, if you consider yourself a literate American, the phrase Daniel in the lion's den is one that you should know. I trust that we will not be so numbed by the familiarity of this particular passage that we do not allow it to speak to us on this morning. Indeed, this is the last of the court tales, the court conflicts, if you will, the last of the narratives about the rule of the most high God. Stories that help us to see that the king of heaven is ultimately in charge of kings and of kingdoms in this world. At the end of Daniel chapter 5, we notice that there was a shift in power in Babylon. Belshazzar, he's out. Darius, 62-year-old, me, he is in. In chapter 6, we see Darius' administrative arrangement. That's what we see in the first verses there. The arrangement for the governance of Babylon comes into view. But one of the questions that we face as we enter into chapter 6 is exactly who is this Darius? Who is he? The question really begs an answer because such a person by this name does not appear in the records of that particular era. Just who then might this Darius be or who could he be? Let's begin by who he is not. There is more than one Darius in the Bible. And Darius the me that we see here must not be confused with Darius,

Darius number one or Darius the great, who is mentioned in Ezra, he's mentioned in Haggai, and he's mentioned in Zechariah. He ruled from 522 BC to 486 BC. The Darius of Daniel chapter 5 and Daniel chapter 6 is not that particular man. Some would suggest that Darius is the Babylonian throne name for Cyrus.

And that they are basically, they are the same person. Well, while that might hold a measure of weight, there is another solution. And it seems better than to see Cyrus as the ruler, the king over the entire Medo-Persian empire at this time. And that Darius, the person that we see here, is a viceroy or a territorial ruler over who ruled over Babylon at this particular time. As we think of the word Darius, the meaning of that word is the royal one. And this seems to have been a title much like that of Caesar or Pharaoh or even of Herod in the New Testament. So it was Darius was the one who ultimately conquered. He commanded an army that included Medes and Persians. And he was known to appoint able Median rulers in order to promote goodwill and loyalty amongst those who he conquered amongst his subjects. This seems to have been the case in Babylon. For records do contain accounts of one known as Guberu, who appeared as governor of Babylonia and other western areas. And it's probable that this particular Guberu is the Darius the Mede. As we're looking at the end of chapter five, for notice what he was. Darius the Mede, what did he do? He received the kingdom, being about 62 years old.

[10 : 08] And if you look at Daniel chapter nine and verse one, it notes that this particular Darius was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans. So it seems like this is the person, Guberu, but a throne name of Darius. Well, let's get into the stuff of the chapter itself. The chapter moves very quickly.

As a matter of fact, if you begin to look down the verses, you see it's a sort of a rapid fire kind of movement. There are about 15 thens. It's sort of we're going from one particular scene to another.

Then verse three, then verse four. And if you were going down, the chapter moves and it shifts. And there are a lot of particular headers that could be given for the particular sections that are here.

But for the purpose of today's exposition, I have chosen three rather simple headers that will help us to see and understand what we have when we come to this passage. The first header is in verses one through 18. There we see Daniel's devotion. In verses 19 through 24, we see Daniel's deliverance.

Daniel's devotion. Daniel's deliverance. But then finally, in verses 25 through 28, we see Darius's decree. Daniel's devotion. Daniel's devotion. Daniel's devotion. Daniel's deliverance. But Daniel's decree.

[11 : 49] Let's first of all note Daniel's devotion in verses one through 18. The picture that we see in these verses is that of a man who expresses his devotion in two different spheres. Notice we have a twofold devotion of Daniel. He is dedicated to his work on the one hand, but then he is dedicated to his God on the other. Dedicated to his work. If you look at the text here, we notice that the government had changed. But Daniel was given a high position in the Medo-Persian administration. He was one of the three higher officials of the new government. And being the person that he was, he was distinguished above the other two presidents to the point that the king had marked him for promotion. Do you see that in verse three? The king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. But if you look closely again, the king was not the only one who had a plan for Daniel. His peers and those under them were seeking to bring charges against him that would discredit him in the eyes of the king. But look at there in verse four. According to what we see there, they could find no ground or complaint or any fault for he was faithful and no error or fault was found in him. Daniel had a dilemma, didn't he? When we think of this familiar account, we normally think of the lions as the predators. But before Daniel faced the four-legged lions, he had was facing two-legged predators. These vicious dirt digging colleagues. And here we are, we see them, they're fault-finding men. Fault-finding men who are on the prowl and Daniel was in fact their prey.

Daniel was an exceptional politician if we could call him that. We need people like him in our government today, don't we? I wonder how Daniel would weigh in on the affairs that are being debated in Washington, D.C. right now or in our own city. Daniel was unlike some of our infamous Chicago politicians as well as those who are in other cities. One of the news items of this particular week was the fact that the 43-year-old former mayor of Detroit, Kwame Kilpatrick, was sentenced. 28 years for racketeering, bribery, extortion, tax crimes. And this is what he had to say.

I really, really, really messed up. Others could confess the same. I really, really, really messed up.

Huh? Daniel would not be able to say that, would he? Huh? But his colleagues, his colleagues were the conniving, disloyal, disingenuous liars. Huh? Entrapment was the plan based on what they knew about Daniel. They knew he, Daniel was very predictable. Huh? He had patterns that were predictable. Now, how would you like to work with vultures like these? Huh? Maybe you do already. Huh? Now, while their plan had the appearance of affirming Medo-Persian rule, huh? According to the law of the Medes and Persians, you see that in verse 8, it really was an underhanded way of getting what they really wanted.

But Daniel was dedicated to his work. He was faithful. He was dutiful. And the quality of his service in Babylon, where he had found a home, it was impeccable. Huh? Did you notice in the text that there was no conflict in Daniel's being dedicated to his duties in the public sphere and his devotion to God? And more often than not, in our work and in our worship, at least there should not be any conflict. There's actually great compatibility there. Using one's God-given gifts is a good thing.

[16 : 44] As a matter of fact, devotion to our God should bring excellence to what we do. Our employers and companies should get the benefit of our devotion to God. Those who claim Jesus Christ as Lord should execute well in whatever domain that they find themselves working in. Huh? Godly bankers, Andy, are better bankers because of their devotion to God. Huh? Godly educators should be better educators or godly cooks or godly construction workers. And as I was reminded this morning, godly students should be better students because of their devotion to God. In Genesis, it was Joseph's devotion to God that caused him to excel in Potiphar's house. Huh? It was his devotion-based work ethic that caused him to resist sexual temptation in the marketplace. Huh? It caused him to excel as a prisoner even when he was incarcerated. Huh? Daniel's dedication to his work was rooted in his devotion to God. What about his devotion to God? We get a glimpse of that in verses 10 through 12. Huh? What a great scene that we find.

Listen to verse 10. When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had his windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and give thanks before his God as he had done previously. Huh? Babylon was home for Daniel.

And he had served that particular country in its kings well. A decade after decade long devotion to God was foundational for his service. It was the reason why he had served Babylon so well. Huh?

He in fact had sought the well-being of the city where God had sent them into exile. He had heeded the preaching of Jeremiah that we find in Jeremiah chapter 29 verses 4-7. I'm not having you turn to it because I'm going to have you turn to another one, but listen to it.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel to all the exiles whom I've sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there. Do not decrease. But here it is. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf for its wealth in its welfare. You will find your welfare. Daniel had sought the welfare of the city. Huh? So here we have Daniel now in his 80s.

[19 : 54] Very much aware that this law had been signed. Huh? And as well as the unchangeable nature of that law. But nothing changed for him. His routine was not altered. His accountability was ultimately to the high king of heaven. And picture him there with me. Three times a day, his living space turns into a prayer space. He walks into his house, opens his windows, looks out toward the west, gets down on his knees, and there he is. He's petitioning the God of heaven. And even after this politically motivated 30-day law, we're told he got down on his knees as he had done previously. My father didn't think that he would live to live past 40 years old. He lived to be 83. Huh? 53 of those years he lived as a man in the streets. Huh?

He was very selfish. Gambler. Adulterer. You name it. That was my dad. He lived for pleasure for 53 years. Then he met the Lord Jesus Christ and became a dedicated servant to God.

My dad didn't leave much behind, but here's two things that he did leave. He left a well-used Bible and a well-worn foam prayer cushion. Huh? This, this, this foam, uh, cushion became a part of the bedroom decor. It was where he nailed, kneeled down and prayed and, and, and called on the Lord daily, mentioning particular people in, by their names in prayer to God. Huh? 80 years old, huh?

On his knees, getting down, getting up. That can be a chore for some people in their 60s, let alone their 80s. Huh? My dad was a man of prayer, but so was this 80 plus year old Daniel.

And Daniel's devotion to God made him an easy target for his enemies. Huh? You see that Daniel here, he's caught on camera and they bring the tape and they show it to the King. Daniel, this exile from Judah, huh? Probably uses some emphasis on his ethnic identity there. He doesn't pay any attention to you, King. He's disloyal and thus he's disqualified. Instead of petitioning you, he's calling on his God.

[22 : 41] And three times a day at that, huh? Here he is, courageous, uncompromising and unashamed, faithful to call on the God of heaven. Uh, look at verse 16. It is there that we finally get to the lion's den, huh? Look at it. Then the king commanded and Daniel was brought and cast into the, there it is the den of lions, huh? Though the king had labored to keep Daniel, he was unsuccessful.

And then we see what we do in verse 16, huh? Cast into the lion's den. What exactly could Daniel expect in the lion's den? What would he face? He had come face to face with these two-legged predators. But what about, what, what, what, what awaited him in the lion's den, huh? Well, the male lions can reach up to about eight feet. That's big. That's bigger than this platform here.

And that is in length. And then there could reach to about four foot in height. Now, how would you like to meet one of those bad boys, let alone a den of them, huh? Males can weigh up to 550 pounds, and females over 400 pounds. And think about their roar. A roar of a lion can be as heard as far as, as three miles, far as three miles away. And you add a little moisture to the air, and they can be heard for five miles away, huh? How'd you like to meet a predator like that? We were in Kenya some years ago, and we got up close and personal with the lion, but we were in the vehicle, huh? We were protected in that way, huh? Think about it. What's going on in Daniel's mind as he is being lowered, lowered, lowered, lowered into the lion's pit. On the one hand, the roar of lions may, of the lions may be in his ears, but what might it have been in his heart? Turn with me back over to

Psalms 91, huh? Perhaps it was a passage like Psalm 91 that may have been in his heart. Psalm 91. Somewhat of a familiar psalm, but I don't know if you've ever read this as it in reference to Daniel in this particular predicament, huh? Listen, look, look at the way it starts.

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High shall abide, and notice here in this place of protection, in the shadow of Almighty. I will say to the Lord, my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust, skip down to verse 9. Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place, the Most High, who is my refuge, no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. And look at verse 13. You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion, the serpent. You will trample underfoot. Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him.

[26 : 21] I will protect him because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will rescue him and honor him. With long life, I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.

Huh? What rings in your head when you're faced with trial, when you're facing fire or beast or trying circumstances or a various art? Scripture and sacred song are not to be simply relegated to a place like we have today, huh? It should be deeply planted in our hearts. Listen to the lyrics from the pens of Townan and Giddy. No guilt in life, no fear in death. This is the power of Christ in me.

From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. Think about it. No power of hell. No scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hands. Till he returns or calms me home.

Here. Here in the classroom. Here in the marketplace. Here in the power of Christ. I stand, huh? Verse 17. What a verse. And a stone was brought and laid at the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of its lords that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

Those who are familiar with the New Testament gospel accounts cannot miss the gospel overtones in this verse. It reminds us of what would happen centuries later with Jesus of Nazareth, the most faithful Israelite of all, who was tried and convicted and crucified by sinful men, who was laid in the tomb, and a stone was placed at its opening, and a seal was placed upon it. And like Jesus, Daniel would, was, or Jesus would be falsely accused.

[28 : 37] The innocent would be condemned. The stone and the seal were not enough to keep Jesus in the tomb. And the God who had raised Christ from the dead in our text was about to show up in ancient Babylon, huh?

Devotion to God can put your friends in a place that's very uncomfortable, even dangerous, because your adversary, the devil, as a lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour, huh?

But Daniel's devotions, friends, is not all that we see in this particular text. We also see Daniel's deliverance in verses 19 through 24. His deliverance by God. Devotion to God, yes, on the one hand, but deliverance by God on the other.

So after a restless night, the anxious king comes in haste to the lion's den, huh? He notices words in verse 20. The king declared to Daniel, Oh, Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you notice, served continually, been able to deliver you from the lions, huh?

Has he been able to do that? Yes, king, in a twofold sense, huh? He delivered me from the two-legged guys and the four-legged animals, huh?

[29 : 56] Here we see that deliverance, here it is, is the heritage of those who honor the most high God, huh? Deliverance is the heritage. Deliverance for Daniel, but in reversal, we see what happened in verse 24, but before that, but look at verse 22.

My God sent his angels, shut the lion's mouth. Because they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him, huh? And before you, O king, I have done no harm.

Then the king was exceedingly dead, commanded that Daniel be taken out of the den. So Daniel was taken out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he trusted in his God, huh?

What a reversal in verse 24. For these conniving men and their families, huh? I don't know if it was a portion of the men that were there, maybe perhaps the ringleaders, but nonetheless, the fate that they thought would be for Daniel was one that was reserved for them.

Daniel's devotion, Daniel's deliverance by almighty God. But notice Daniel's, Darius's decree, huh?

[31 : 19] Darius's decree about God. This chapter moves to a very, very fitting close. It interestingly, it ends with a proclamation of a pagan king, and here is a king that got it right.

Look at verse 25. Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree that in all my royal dominion, people are to tremble before the God of Daniel.

He got it right. Friends, if we see in this story that it's primarily about Daniel's faithful devotion, we've not gone far enough.

Yeah, we see that. It's ultimately about Daniel's faithful God. And though an earthly ruler bound by a bogus law was powerless to deliver Daniel, not so with the God of heaven.

And Daniel responded to the Lord's great deliverance with a decree, a royal proclamation to all of those who were under his rule. The combination of Daniel's devotion and the Lord's deliverance compelled him to give a decree.

[32 : 35] All of those in the land, what were they to do? Darius was so impressed that he called on his people to tremble. Oh, look at this takeaway for us today. To tremble in fear before the God of Daniel.

Impressed, he called on his people to tremble in fear before him. Darius saw the Lord as a deity to be respected. One who was worthy of honor and recognition.

Why was it that such honor and recognition was appropriate? Because he's alive. He is a living God. He's enduring forever because of the nature of his kingdom.

He's active and he's supreme. His kingdom will never be destroyed. His dominion shall... Neither shall his dominion be to an end. He delivers and rescues, works signs and wonders.

That's the God of Daniel. So the stories. We'll get divisions on next week. But so the stories end. And they end with a very fitting takeaway for Daniel's original readers as well as for us.

[33 : 44] The God of Daniel is to be honored. And from the New Testament vantage point, the God of Daniel is indeed the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who did not abandon Daniel to the den of lions. Nor did he abandon his son to the grave. He did not allow him, his Holy One, to see corruption.

He is to be worshipped and served in awe and reference. And he is to be the vision, to have the first place, if you will, in our hearts. The text helps us to see that the God who delivers the faithful is worthy of our devotion.

And may we come to him through Jesus Christ. And may we see him as worthy of our devotion. And may we give him nothing less than that.

Let me pray. Father, we love you. We give thanks to you. And thank you for this text on this morning. I pray, O God, that this particular text would help us once again to have a clear vision of you and who you are.

[35 : 06] And that we would see you indeed as the king of heaven that is worthy, Lord, of our devotion. Worthy of our allegiance.

We bless you today. We give you honor and we give you praise. Amen.