

Faith under fiery trials

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. Certainly good to be in the house of the Lord together with you to worship our great God, of whom we just read the great things that God can do and often does, and glory to his holy name.

Greetings also from my wife, who's with me this morning, and from your brothers and sisters in the Cornerstone Evangelical Church. That's our home church. Where we have been for the last 20, it's going on 21 years this summer, since we've been there, or 22 actually.

And so it's been great to be in the service of the Lord and trust that we are rejoicing together in that that he has given us to do.

The psalmist in Psalms 116, I recognize we're reading in Psalms 170, but I want to just turn our attention to Psalms 116 just for a few moments.

The first two verses, the psalmist says, What a beautiful reminder that is to us of why we are to love the Lord.

[1 : 3 0] The psalmist says, Because he hath heard my voice and my supplications, because he hath inclined me, therefore will I call upon him.

And don't we do the same thing? Friends, close friends of ours, they are those that are attentive to us, that listen to us, that pay attention to us, and likewise we to them.

But there is no friend greater than our God, who is always attentive, always listening to our supplications, to our petitions, but he also longs to listen to our praise, giving him glory, honor, and thankfulness.

And so may we be encouraged to not only bring our request to him, we know that he hears and he answers, but let's also talk to him out of a heart full of praise for his greatness towards us.

Daniel is one of those men in the Bible that truly did this. He loved the Lord, and I believe it was because of, from a youth on already, he had a deep relationship with God.

[2 : 4 3] Back in Jerusalem, before he went, he was taken captive and taken to Babylon, he had a deep relationship with God, and God, he was sure God heard him, and God was attentive to him.

And so he loved God greatly. And the Bible says of Daniel too that God loved him, a man whom God loved. So let's just start in that.

A question of proposition this morning. What does faith in the presence of enemies look like? What does faith in the presence of enemies look like?

I don't know if we Canadians have a good picture of that. Do we have opposition? Do we have those that scorn us because of our faith, our love, our commitment to God?

Yeah, we do. But do we have enemies of the highest rank because of our faith? I don't think we do. I don't think we have a clear picture of that from a personal experience.

[3 : 56] Now, reading through books, we do get a pretty good picture of that already. This is the second year that I'm reading through a book called Bound to be Free with the Suffering Church.

And years ago I read that, and I decided this year again I would read through that. And in there, there's testimonies and stories of people who encounter enemies of the gospel, enemies of Christ.

And they become very personal enemies to believers. What does faith in the presence of enemies look like?

I've been working through the book of Daniel in our church in 2019. It's a very slow process, but it's very intentional.

I want to work through the book of Daniel, through the prophecies of end times, and then work my way into revelations. And Mr. Tycho will probably say that's a very noble task.

[5 : 04] I'm not up for a noble task like that. But I just sense that we know that opposition is increasing year after year. Our lives as believers will become more and more difficult year after year.

And we see that, we sense that here in Canada already, as other countries have. And so my intention is to preach through these prophecies and get into the book of Revelation for equipping believers for what is to come.

But to prepare us to stand strong in the Lord. So I left off in chapter 6, and I'm going to be starting chapter 7 in our church here shortly.

I covered chapter 6 in three sessions. Each of those sessions were about 45 minutes long, so we're going to be here about two hours. And no, no, we won't be.

I'm going to do simply an overview of chapter 6. And just highlighting some of the things that I've seen in this passage of Scripture.

[6 : 15] All for the purpose of encouraging all of us as believers. What does faith in the presence of enemies look like?

The lives of Daniel and his three friends has always caught my attention and really intrigued me. And through my deeper studies of these men and their trying and difficult circumstances, my love and respect and inspiration of these has really served me.

To have a deep appreciation for Daniel, for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. A wonderful group of men that we can look up to regarding suffering for the Lord.

And so I wish to title this morning's sermon, Faith Under Fiery Trials. Faith Under Fiery Trials.

And with that, let's again just ask God to be our teacher through his Holy Spirit. Father, we thank you again this morning for the opportunity we have of being together with believers, like-minded people who also are Christians, who love you, Lord, who have come to worship and to praise you and to be encouraged and also to be challenged.

[7 : 40] And so it is our prayer, our desire, Lord, that you, through your Holy Spirit, would be very central in our hearts as we reflect on this story. And much more than a story, it is a teaching for us, that we too, even today already, can purpose in our heart to you no matter what.

Thank you for Daniel and for the picture that he's going to be showing us of his life here. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. From my observation, the overarching theme of chapter 6 is certainly Daniel among the lions.

And what I found interesting is Daniel is actually among the lions long before he gets to the den. And we'll look at that a little bit this morning. He finds himself in opposition by his colleagues in the government employment that he was involved in in Babylon.

Verses 1 through 3 give us a backdrop, really a historical point of reference to where this is all coming from. Up to this point, Daniel has succeeded two kingdoms already.

He, first of all, began serving Nebuchadnezzar. And then when Nebuchadnezzar, his reign ended, then he served Belshazzar, both in the Babylonian Empire.

[9 : 19] And now he has been appointed to serve King Darius, the first king in the Medo-Persian Empire. And then we see, not in this chapter, but further on we see that he serves Cyrus as well, King Cyrus.

And Cyrus is the one by whom God set the Israelites free from their captivity in Babylon and sanctioned them going back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, rebuild Jerusalem, and for the exiles to make their way back home again.

And so it's this third kingdom that is on display this morning in chapter 6 under whom Daniel is serving. And so he's appointed to serve King Darius to be overseer and a commanding president of two other presidents to whom 120 princes gave account.

And up to this point in Daniel's life in Babylon, things have gone fairly well, or at least for us, things have gone fairly well for Daniel.

Of course, we know that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were put up to the test of the fiery furnace. Daniel is absent in that trial.

[10 : 40] Where he was, the Bible doesn't clearly tell us, but he is not involved in that trial as severe as the other three were.

But here in verse 3, we find that Daniel's troubles begin. It says that Daniel was preferred above the presidents.

And the princes that were serving Darius. It says, Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

Now, preference and privileges or favoritism is seldom well received. I think all of us looking back into our childhood, especially if we've come from a large family, or even if we've just come from a family of two, possibly you have experienced favoritism.

You've experienced preferred treatment either to yourself or to another sibling. That is seldom well received when that does happen.

[12 : 03] And it's good parents generally don't do this. Not intentional, but sometimes by accident does happen. Where one particular child is much more obedient than the others.

Much more willing to listen. Much more willing to serve. And the parents naturally will tend to prefer that child. Now, we don't read any ill will on King Darius' part, but that's what was happening here.

Daniel is preferred among the others, or above the others. And of course, as we read along, we see that this favoritism, or this preference that Daniel received, was charged with emotion, and it was challenged by others.

In the Bible, we read many stories where there was preferential treatment, favoritism.

Rebecca and Isaac, they had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was loved. Esau was hated. Jacob was preferred by his mother.

[13 : 21] And that is throughout the story, we read that Rebecca favors Jacob. And Isaac probably favors Esau more. Jacob favored Rachel, the younger of the two sisters that he married.

Laban gave him the older daughter first, Leah. And then when Jacob found he was tricked, then Laban made an agreement with Jacob he could serve another seven years, and he'd give him Rachel.

Jacob loved Rachel, and Leah always got the sense that she was hated by her husband. I don't really think that Jacob hated her, but he had favoritism toward Rachel.

In the story of Joseph and his brothers, who Jacob was the father, Joseph was a favored one.

The second youngest, he was a favored son. And so preferential treatment is something that has happened years already throughout Scripture, and it continues on to this day.

[14 : 39] I don't know if you've experienced being a teacher's pet. It can have some fun little quirks to it, but it is generally, it has a negative by others.

Others that are not a teacher's pet. It really sets a person up to be bullied. So that still happens today when there's favoritism shown.

So as I said before, no ill will here on King Darius' part in giving Daniel preferred treatment or preferred position of authority.

It is simply because of what verse 3 says, that in him was found an excellent spirit, a spirit that was submissive to God.

And so also, we know in our lives, when we are submissive to God, our employer will sit up and take notice of us. Because as we submit to God and all his commands to us, we automatically will submit under an employer.

[15 : 43] And so we see this here is happening with Daniel. He has an ex- and the king puts him into a position of authority above the others.

So this is charged with emotion and frustration, and Daniel begins to be hated by others.

Daniel is hated by others. And so this is what I was referring to before. He was among the lions right from here already.

As soon as that preferential authority was given him and others became jealous and they began hating Daniel. He was among human lions before he was among the animal lions.

And so this favoritism that he was being shown set the stage for fault finding, to nitpick, to comb through everything he does.

[16 : 49] Whether that's, and they start in the king's business, the thing that he does to serve the country. They comb through that, searching for something that Daniel does wrong.

And they search carefully. These men were on a fault finding mission. Why? To discredit Daniel. To have him removed of their sight, as we see what their intention is here.

It says in verse 4, So they start in what is most logical, because Darius was not necessarily a God-fearing man, not a believer.

And so they couldn't, they didn't start there, although that probably was maybe in their mind, and they went there later. But they started in his role as being a servant to the king, under the king's business.

And they searched carefully what they could find and fault Daniel with. And certainly, they found nothing.

[18 : 02] Nothing to condemn Daniel, as far as how he did the king's business. Everything was A-OK. He passed their test.

But they did find fault in him, which we'll look at, in his off-duty life. Not on his on-duty life with the king, but in his off-duty life with his God.

What a testimony, what an inspiration, what a challenge to us to find this man being scrutinized, concernless, and being without blame.

What would that look like for us? If a fellow employee would find, search us to see if there was anything we did wrong for our company that we work for, or perhaps as a business owner, how would we stand the test?

When I read this, I see this as a challenge, an inspiration for me to be upright in all my dealings. And so this failed.

[19 : 22] They resorted then to subtle trickery. And it began with the king, to trick the king. Verses 5-9 says, Then these men said, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto the king, King Darius, live forever. All the presidents of the kingdom and the governors and the princes and the counselors and the captains have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree that whosoever shall ask a petition of man for thirty days save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing that it be not changed according to the law of Medes and Persians which altereth not. Wherefore, King Darius sign the writing and the decree.

So they resorted to a more complex approach. They strategized how they could determine something with the king, have the king's signature on it, have the king's authority on it, by which they could now come against Daniel.

and not against his service to the king but against his life and service to God. They observed Daniel's personal life and if they tricked the king, if this would work to demand worship, they could trap Daniel.

[21 : 17] They knew that. They will have observed Daniel's faithfulness to his God. They were sure this would be successful for Daniel toward Jerusalem.

He worshipped toward his God faithfully. And it's not that he started to worship here. He worshipped already in Nebuchadnezzar's day.

in Belshazzar's day. He worshipped in Jerusalem already before he came into captivity. That is who Daniel was. That is who his three friends were, teenagers, as they were taken captive into a foreign land.

They were God-fearing men who openly, unashamedly, worshipped God. So to man he erred regarding his faithfulness to God in his off-duty time.

But to God he was without fault, faithful in everything he did. So Daniel was preferred above others. He was hated by others.

[22 : 33] Yet, Daniel resolved that he would be true to God. And we can read that in verse 10. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime.

Daniel had a prayer life. Daniel lived his faith openly to others, for others to see.

He had a powerful prayer life. He is believed to be possibly into his 80s here and he kept prayer a priority.

even though he was very busy in the king's business, he maintained a prayer life with God. And isn't that another challenge for us?

It seems the busier we are in our employment and our businesses, the less time we have to give to God in prayer. Daniel continued to pray three times a day even though he was very busy serving King Darius.

[23 : 56] he prayed three times a day. So prayer is not something he started after the king's decree, rather it is something that he continued from before that time.

Daniel had his allegiance toward God. Throughout the book of Daniel we can read several prayers prayers that he prayed to God.

A couple of them in chapter 2, 18 through 23, we won't read that, but there Daniel prayed when he found out that him and his three friends would likely be killed along with the magicians and astrologers and all those that couldn't interpret the king Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Daniel and his friends were in the path of destruction. And so Daniel asks for some time with the king that he can interpret the dream.

And he tells his friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they petitioned the Lord and God reveals in a vision what kind of a dream Nebuchadnezzar has had. And so then Daniel prays a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the revelation of that dream.

[25 : 16] And then he goes and tells the king and all of their lives are spared. He was a man of prayer. In chapter 6, verse 10, he prayed.

In chapter 9, he has a model prayer, praying for the people of Israel and in their captivity. Daniel has his allegiance toward God.

I'm sure he will remember the fiery trial of the three friends as he faced this trial. He could have resorted to closet prayers, which is a safe way to pray.

He could have hid behind Paul's instruction in Romans 13, verse 1, where it says, let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God.

The powers that be are of God. Paul instructed the believers to be subject to the higher authorities. He could have submitted to this king's degree and hid behind that, but he didn't.

[26 : 27] or perhaps Peter's instruction in 2 Peter 3, 13 through 14, where it says, to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king is supreme or unto governors unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well.

He could have stood behind this as well and taken his prayer into the closet. but Daniel didn't.

He continued to pray unashamedly. And I believe Daniel had a good grasp on what Paul says, that if we are ashamed of God in this life, God will be ashamed of us in the coming time.

Daniel was not ashamed of his God. the window opened toward Jerusalem and he prayed three times a day. He actually practiced, if we turn to Acts chapter 4, it's an interesting story shortly after Jesus was ascended to heaven and the church began.

In Acts chapter 4, in verse 18 through 20, when Peter and John were taken captive and questioned and threatened, they were not to preach in the name of Jesus anymore because he had been done away with as far as the religious leaders were concerned.

[28 : 02] Jesus was but Paul and or Peter and John and the other apostles, they continued the work that Jesus gave them to do, to preach and to teach and to baptize.

And so here in Acts 4, when they had taken them captive, it says, and they, the religious leaders, called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John answered and said unto them, whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge ye, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Peter and John were bold about their faith, about Jesus Christ, as Daniel was bold centuries before that, before the king Darius.

It inspires us, it inspires me, to live unashamedly for Jesus. Whether we go to the restaurant and we pray and the room might be full of people, ungodly people, we bow our head and give God thanks for the food.

[29 : 23] No matter what others do, no matter what others, if they see us, no matter what others think, we give thanks to God for the food. And so on. there's many other illustrations of how we can live boldly for God.

Daniel is faithful to his God. I was reminded of our trip to Israel.

I'm not sure if Wayne and Sid, if you were on the plane from Toronto, but there were many, many Jewish people on LL air, and they would continue to practice this throughout our flight.

At a certain hour, they would get up, wake others up, and put on their, some of them put on their big hats, or their robes, and they would have a compass in their hand, turn toward Jerusalem, and when the compass had found pointing in the right direction, they would pray.

Some would kneel in the aisle, some would stand praying, but they would continue to do that. And I thought to myself, am I that dedicated? Now it can become a ritual, it can be empty, that's true, but it showed to me they were unashamed to pray toward Jerusalem, to God.

[30 : 57] And I was challenged on that flight, to renew my resolve to be faithful to God, no matter what others think, no matter where I am, but to be faithful to God.

We're encouraged in Scripture to hold fast to the profession of our faith, without wavering. Why? For he is faithful who hath promised.

Who is faithful to us? God. His mercy is everlasting, his love endureth forever. He is faithful to us, and he calls us to be faithful to him.

We can read a story from the Roman time, Polycarp, some of you will have probably read of him before. He was a bishop of Smyrna, who was 86 years of age when he was arrested in 156 AD, many, many years ago.

And the Roman officers demanded of him that he should deny Christ, or deny Christ. Polycarp refused, and he answered, 86 years I have served him, and he never did me any wrong.

[32 : 11] How can I blaspheme my king who saved me? Of course, we know the outcome of that. Polycarp was sentenced to his death at the stake February 23rd, right this day, February 23rd, in 156 AD.

And he died a martyr's death, rather than deny his Lord. What a testimony of inspiration for the millions who've lived and suffered since.

Like Polycarp, what an inspiring testimony Daniel is to us. He also remembered Solomon's prayer to God for the people.

With that, let's turn to 1 Kings chapter 8. 1 Kings chapter 8, I want to read 44 to 53. 1 Kings chapter 8, verse 44.

Solomon is praying here and he's praying for the people of Israel. He says, If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them and shalt pray unto the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for them, then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

[33 : 36] If they sin against thee, for there is no man that sinneth not, and thou be angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near, yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whether they were carried captives, and repent and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness, and so return unto thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name, then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven, thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions were and they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who care, that they may have compassion on them, for they be thy people, and thine inheritance which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, and from the midst of the furnace of iron, that thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them, and all that they call unto thee, for thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God.

Daniel remembers Solomon. He remembers the prayer that Solomon prayed for the people, that if they would be captive, or if they would have sinned, which obviously that's why they were taken captive, God's punishment on them, but if they would look toward Jerusalem, Solomon is praying that God will hear.

God will hear their prayer. And that is exactly what is happening here. Daniel opens his window toward Jerusalem, and he prays. He prays for himself.

He prays for his people. He knows the 70 years that are determined that they're supposed to be there, but he continues to pray. And he does so very faithfully.

[35 : 57] No matter the threat, Daniel diligently prayed toward Israel, the land, Jerusalem, the city, and the holy temple, the place of worship.

In verse 11 of our text, it says, Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. A strong example of not compromising our faith in God when under fiery trial.

This is what faith looks like in the presence of enemies. This is what faith looks like in the presence of enemies.

Daniel's trouble then becomes a fiery trial. Like I already mentioned, I've been reading in this book, Bound to be Free.

This last week, they were devotionals from Pastor Samuel Lamb, who was a prisoner in China for 21 years. And while he was there, while he was in prison, his beloved wife passed away, he was unable to go to her funeral.

[37 : 24] They refused him permission to leave for his wife's funeral. But he writes in here, well, actually, all of these devotionals have been very touching to me.

But I want to read the one that was here last night from Pastor Samuel Lamb. And he says, When we suffer for our faith in Jesus Christ, we should never complain to God or hate those who cause the suffering.

The Bible teaches us again and again that suffering is a mark of true discipleship. Who complain, do so at their own cost. They will not only suffer more and thus lose their victory, and when you lose your victory, you lose God's blessings.

Therefore, hardships and trouble are times to experience the help of God. And it is that, not what we want, God's help. God is our refuge and strength and ever-present help and trouble.

He goes on to say, I have had the privilege. I have had the privilege. Can you imagine? You come to a point where you see your captivity, your prison, as hard as it is to see that as a privilege.

[38 : 36] He says, I have had the privilege to be punished for 21 years of imprisonment. That's what my accusers named it, punishment. It turned out to be my privilege.

The troubles were many. Oh, how I longed for God's help. It has taught me this spiritual truth. The greater the need, the greater the help. What a blessing. I dare say, if a preacher has never suffered, he can never fully comprehend God's help.

I have experienced plenty of trouble. It opened the way to see plenty of God's help, as it is available to you. Very inspiring stories.

Go back a few years, but very helpful for us today. Yes, those believers living in the lands of persecution are very aware of what can appear to begin as a minor resistance can easily escalate to a severe trial.

Here, Daniel's accusers go before King Darius. They had devised a very clever plan and wanted it executed.

[39 : 49] And they swept the king along with it, as we read that King Darius signed this decree in verse 9. 12-15.

We read, Then they came near and spake before the king concerning the king's decree. Hast thou not signed a decree that every man that shall speak a petition of any god or man within thirty days save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?

The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel which is of the church of Judah regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men assembled unto the king and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is that no degree nor statute which the king establishes may be changed.

And so Darius realizes he's been cornered, he's been tricked in a very subtle way to do away or demote the man who he trusted to set him into a position of great authority.

[41 : 26] What Darius suffered here is the fate of loving the praise of men more than the praise of God. Loving the praise of men more than the praise of God.

They lifted him up as a very good king and he bought into that praise. signed the degree and now he finds himself cornered.

I believe Darius would have never done this otherwise had it not been for the trickery of these men. But he kept his word and he ordered Daniel to the lion's den.

But in the midst of that he trusted God for his deliverance. As we can read in 16 and 17, then the king commanded and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions.

Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, thy God whom thou service continually he will deliver thee. Notice that this king has observed Daniel's faithfulness to his God.

[42 : 35] He says, thy God whom thou service continually. Did the king have a problem with Daniel serving God? No, he didn't. He didn't. He'd observed it.

He saw it. He knew that Daniel was serving God. This must have completely slipped his mind when the other wise men had him through sign this degree.

And so he says, may this God serve thee or deliver thee whom thou service continually. Of course, we can read that Darius was burdened for Daniel.

The king was tricked and he knew it, but all wasn't lost. He as well thought perhaps Daniel's God could save him.

And this is what the king does in a state of being burdened. Verse 18 says, then the king went to his palace and passed the night fasting. Neither were instruments and music brought to him and his sleep left him.

[43 : 45] So he was saddened obviously because he had not only given Daniel a position of authority, he had faith in Daniel. Daniel was his friend.

Daniel was a servant to him. He trusted Daniel. So obviously he is saddened. He refuses food. He refuses entertainment and sleep has departed from him.

Why? Because his heart is burdened for someone he cares for. We find the very next day and early in the morning, he visits the den of lions where Daniel is.

It says in verse 19, He wanted to release Daniel if Daniel was yet alive.

no indication that the king was a God fearing man. However, he seemed to recognize Daniel's God to be real and to be powerful.

[45 : 01] Listen to what he says in his lamentation as he comes there that morning. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel. And the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions.

Notice he recognized Daniel's commitment to God. And he recognized God's ability to save. And then we see Daniel's response in honor to the king instead of the being he was accused of.

They said that Daniel did not regard the king in verse 12 nor the degree. Now he didn't regard the degree that they had signed but he had a high regard for the king.

And so it was a false accusation in part. And so Daniel responds in verse 21. Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever.

Daniel regarded the king. He submitted himself to his authority, his government. In that he has not done anything wrong.

[46 : 30] Then Daniel makes a declaration in two ways. First of all, God's deliverance from the lions and from death, and that he was found innocent of crimes that he was accused of against the king and also against God.

God. We can read that in verse 22. He says, My God hath sent his angel and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me.

He declared God's goodness to him, God's extension of life to him. Now, not every believer is spared death.

death. Often believers die, whether it's at the stake, whether it's beheading, starvation, or whatever. Many believers die for their faith.

Daniel recognizes that God has spared him. He recognizes he spared him for another purpose, though he doesn't know what. But in his second declaration, he says that for as much as before him, before God, innocency was found in me, and before thee also.

[47 : 50] He's innocent before God, he's innocent before King Darius. So God's deliverance has been through his, God's will, God's sovereign will.

Then we see that Darius' sadness has turned to joy, in 23. Then was the king exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the lion's den.

So Daniel was taken up out of the lion's den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. King Darius makes that he's honoring to God, he fears God, he worships God, he serves God, and therefore God has spared him.

No hurt was found on Daniel. Why? Because he believed in his God. As I said already, God doesn't always deliver from harm or death those who believe in him.

James, the first martyr, wasn't spared. He was stoned to death. Paul, the apostle, wasn't spared.

[49 : 02] he died under the hands of the Romans. Polycarp wasn't spared. The Lord Jesus wasn't spared.

Many of our fellow brothers and sisters in the lands of persecution are not spared. But sometimes God does spare.

It's not for us to know why, but God in his sovereignty spares often, while others he takes up to glory.

In like manner, we can also, probably all of us, name someone, either we've read about or a family member that has died because of a car accident and the injuries they sustained from them, or maybe has been overtaken with an illness, a terminal illness, and succumb to death.

Or perhaps we know of some that have died because of their faith. Yet God's goodness is unquestionable. God's faithfulness to his children is unquestionable.

[50 : 13] All God calls for us is a song we sang, trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.

We can trust God though the trials become fiery around us. And then in the last section we read Daniel is vindicated.

Darius swiftly judged and condemned the actual wrongdoers. He says in verse 24, and the king commanded and they brought those men which had accused Daniel and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives, and the lions had mastery over them and break all of their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

Let's judge these but obviously God judged them for their false accusation, for their evil intention and one day we can be sure God will right every wrong that's done to us as believers.

believers. We need not to revenge or avenge ourselves. Let's leave that up to God. If we suffer for our faith, let's leave that up to God.

[51 : 34] God always has dealt righteously with his people and he will always deal righteously with his people in the end. So this is the same den, same hungry lions, but a completely different outcome than it was for Daniel.

God's protective providence taken from them, not only these men but we see their families suffered as well. When I look at that, there's a lesson for us as men.

God holds us as men accountable for our families, the leadership. therefore, we must be careful.

We must follow the Lord, obey the Lord, teach that to our families, live lives that exemplify that. For these men did not, and not only did they suffer and die, but their wives and their children were exterminated too, done away with.

let's take our leadership as men, as husbands seriously. Darius exercised God's principle of judgment to those who falsely accused him, and we can read that, we won't read that this morning, but in Deuteronomy 19, 16 through 21, God told Moses this to tell the children of Israel, if there's a false accuser among you, he needs to be dealt with, and not only him, but his families as well.

[53 : 17] And there's other stories and scriptures that repeat that same message. Then Darius made an announcement of peace in verse 25, he says, then the king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied unto you.

He goes on to say, I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom, that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.

Now Darius knows he cannot overwrite this other law, or take it away, diminish it, but he can overwrite it with another law, and that's what he does.

he makes this declaration, this firm decree, that all people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, this God that has shown himself all-powerful and all-faithful to Daniel.

All must worship the God of Daniel. The reasons, he is the only living God, he has an everlasting kingdom, and he is powerful to rescue and do signs and wonders, as he says in 26 and 27.

[54 : 48] So Daniel goes on, he prospers in this kingdom, and in one other one, Cyrus, the king Cyrus, that actually has God's sovereignty practiced through him where he releases the children of Israel after 70 years of bondage.

church. So that's four kingdoms in total that Daniel was in a governmental official. And so as Paul says in Ephesians 3.20, Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us.

Daniel experienced this, and so can we. And so every Sunday when this benediction is read, take this to yourself.

This God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly in your life above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us. And yes, in persecution, in suffering, God is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think.

We too, if we should live to see that day where persecution becomes very harsh, we can say like Samuel Lamb, it is a privilege.

[56 : 12] It is a privilege to suffer for the Lord. Now true, this is a wonderful bedtime story. My mom read it to us.

I love the stories as a young boy. I loved it when Eva read it to our children, our two sons. it's a wonderful bedtime story that shows God's power, God's ability, the faithfulness of Daniel.

But it is also a wonderful inspiration for us today as adults, as we live out our faith day by day, in a world that like in Daniel's day, is becoming more and more hostile to God's children.

may we have the resolve of Daniel in chapter 6, or may we have the resolve of his three friends in chapter 3.

Daniel gives us an example. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego give us an example. We may not have to put that into practice today, and maybe not tomorrow, and maybe not in our lifetime, but we know the clouds of our religious freedom, of our freedom to worship, there's clouds there.

[57 : 32] We can read that in the news. It is coming. It's prophesied it'll come. And we are to rejoice when we are found worthy to suffer for Christ.

dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone, dare to have a purpose firm. Let's make our purpose firm to God.

I want to close with James chapters, chapter 1, verses 1 and 2. James, a beloved writer, is writing to the 12 tribes that have been scattered because of persecution into many different lands, and he's writing these words to them.

Words of encouragement, words of challenge, words of help, that they do not lose faith, they do not give up. He says in James, chapter 1, 1, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

He says, My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations. Some of your other versions will say trials.

[58 : 57] When you fall into divers trials. Knowing this, this is why we should rejoice when we come into divers trials.

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience, but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

What's God's purpose in trials? What's God's purpose in persecution for our faith? To perfect us. To make us more like Jesus Christ.

To make us holy like he is holy. May God's will be done in our life. And we know we can count on the power of his spirit to enable us.

If it's a small trial, small testing of our faith, or if it's something huge, we know that God and his Holy Spirit will empower us to be faithful to the end.

[60 : 02] Let's pray. Father, we are grateful for Daniel. The entire book he has written, but particularly this morning, Lord, we have looked at chapter 6.

What a beautiful chapter in the life of one man who has resolved and pledged his allegiance to you no matter what. And he lived that way.

He didn't just profess that. He lived that way. And he's shown us, Lord, how we are to live. True Lord, we have great freedom here in Canada for which we thank you and praise you.

Even this morning, we've come together openly to worship you, to praise you, to make supplication to you, to be together in fellowship with one another without any fear of being taken captive, to being imprisoned.

Yet, Lord, we know it is coming. As others of your children have suffered, Lord, it is coming to us as well. I pray, Lord, that this has, what you have shown us this morning, does not drive fear into us, but much rather, it empowers us to trust you, to rely on the Holy Spirit, to resolve already today how we will faithfully honor you and glorify you in our life, to live a life of faith, in the presence, whether it is in a land of peace like we have today or in the land of persecution like it might be tomorrow, but to live faithfully for you.

[61 : 46] Thank you, Lord, that you reward those that do live faithfully as you did to Daniel, as you did to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and as you've done to countless of men and women throughout the scriptures and throughout our history as well.

you have shown your song on behalf of them that trust you, and so also we know you will do that for us, should it be that we encounter those trials.

Thank you for your people, and I pray your blessing upon each one as we all leave and go to our homes and into our workplaces coming week. We pray this in the precious name of Jesus, our Lord and risen Savior.

Amen. Amen. Amen.