

The Scary Sleepover

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[0 : 00] Friends, let's pray. Our loving Heavenly Father, you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. And as we open your word, we pray that it would be living and active in our hearts, in the hearts of these children as they respond to it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Well, welcome to Daniel chapter 6, our last passage in this short sermon series. And it's great if you have your Bible open to Daniel. Because Daniel 6 begins with a miracle.

The miracle of a squeaky, clean politician. Come on. That's the only joke I have today. Help me out, please.

Daniel has faithfully served at least three monarchs, and King Darius is the latest one here in chapter 6. And by the time Darius takes the throne, Daniel has already been in Babylon for at least 66 years, meaning if he went there as a teenager, he is now in his 80s.

And for 66 years, Daniel has never turned aside from worshiping the Lord God, even as he's faithfully served each king.

[1 : 15] You see how he's been able to faithfully serve the monarch in this foreign culture, far from Jerusalem, and yet he has never turned aside from also serving the Lord God.

And so God has used him as a witness to God's steadfast character. And we've also seen how he's actually been able to be a tremendous blessing to Babylon.

A blessing to this foreign empire, even though, shockingly, it's Babylon who tore Israel away from the promised land. And one of the most striking things about this book has been that we find some of the most beautiful speeches not on the lips of Daniel, the Jew, but actually on the lips of these foreign, non-Jewish kings.

And you could almost call these speeches, you could call them songs instead, songs. And each time the Lord reveals his sovereign power through some action, showing that he is the king over all the world, each time he does that, there's a king who responds with this melody, singing a song of praise to the Lord.

So Nebuchadnezzar, in chapter 4, he sings like this, And now here we are in chapter 6, and it's King Darius who picks up that same melody and praises Daniel's God after Daniel's delivered from the lion's den.

[2 : 51] Have a look with me at verse 26. I make a decree that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble in fear before the God of Daniel.

For he is the living God, enduring forever. His kingdom shall never be destroyed. His dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues. He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth.

He who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions. And King Darius echoes King Nebuchadnezzar's song, but he also adds a very important new lyric to the song.

For he is the living God. He is the living God. It's the second time, actually, that Darius uses this line, that gives God this name.

The first is back in verse 20. When he approaches the lion's den after his sleepless night. It reads like this. Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?

[3 : 54] So what does this title mean? The living God. It's used only twice here in chapter 6. But in the whole scriptures, it's used over 30 times, all the way from Deuteronomy to Revelation.

So of course, first of all, living means not dead. Not dead and lifeless, like the false idols made of wood or stone that other nations serve.

God is living. All life originates from God and is lovingly sustained by God. But it also means active, living and active God.

The God who's in control of human history, who speaks with power, and who also rescues with power. So Daniel 6.20. Daniel, has the living God been able to deliver you from the lions? Well, yes. Yes, he has. He has miraculously rescued Daniel. Verse 23. Because Daniel trusted in his God. The living God is the God who delivers, who rescues.

[5 : 00] And like I said, this title, it continues into the New Testament. So in Matthew chapter 16, listen to this. Jesus asked his disciples, who do you say that I am?

And Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. So now this beautiful melody that was sung in the Old Testament has been picked up by Simon Peter on his lips, applied to Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God, who possesses the same character as God the Father, speaking with power and acting with power.

Jesus, God's Son, the living God who rescues us. Because in the very next breath, after Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, it's Jesus who responds and says, I am going to die on a cross and after three days I will rise again.

And of course, at first glance, this seems completely incompatible with all the characteristics I described of a living God. Life is not death.

Life is not, life has to be active. Death is not active. And death is not deliverance. Yet, after the impossible is proven true and Jesus rises in power from the dead, it's the same Peter who declares Jesus as the living God again in his sermon in Acts chapter 2.

[6 : 39] he says this, this Jesus, God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it's not possible for him to be held by it.

And he continues a little later, being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing, this power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

In other words, as the living God, Jesus Christ, conquers death and opens up a way for you and I to share in the glorious living, in the glorious life of the living God with him, we receive this new life by repentance and faith, the life of the living God dwelling in us.

Here's how St. Paul declares the same good news. Listen to 2 Corinthians 6. He says, we are the temple of the living God. As God said, I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

Daniel loved and knew and served the living God as his Lord and Savior. And that's how he was able to walk faithfully through the highs and lows of exile and persecution and life-threatening predicaments and miraculous rescues.

[8 : 11] If you receive Jesus as your living God by repentance and faith, he will dwell with you and take care of you. And as Daniel shows us in his life and his example, there are so many implications for us when we serve the living God.

when we serve the living God. And I want to look at three of them with you that come from Daniel 6. The first implication is that my heart is full of thankfulness to my living God.

Full of thankfulness. So when Daniel's enemies in this chapter, when they conspire against him and accuse him falsely, you could probably forgive Daniel if he just decided to throw in the towel.

After all, he's faithfully served God for 66 years. And he's over 80 years old. I think a pragmatic person like you or I would probably say something like, Lord, I'm an old man now.

And I've proven myself to you, I think. But there's this law, this new law. And you know, the law is the law. And I don't want to cause any trouble. So I'll talk to you in about a month.

[9 : 23] But that's not Daniel. Look at verse 10 with me. When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open towards Jerusalem.

He got down on his knees three times a day and he prayed and gave thanks before God as he had done previously. So Daniel knows about this dangerous law. And yet he continues with his daily routine of giving thanks before his God three times a day.

because the living God he knows and loves is trustworthy and in control. And he has shown his lifelong care for Daniel. Daniel loves the Lord and he's committed to lifelong obedience to his God and King.

Nothing changes for Daniel because God doesn't change. His heart is full of continual thanksgiving. And this is the first implication of new life with the living God. The second is that my hope is placed in the living God alone. So King Darius is the most powerful man in the whole world.

[10 : 37] He rules a kingdom that is 5.5 million square kilometers. The largest empire that the world has ever known. Yet Darius is powerless to save even one man who he knows is innocent and who we can see that he cares about.

He can't even save one man. Verse 14 The king when he heard these words was much distressed. He set his mind to deliver Daniel and he labored till the sun went down to rescue him.

But there's nothing he can do to fix this law. And verse 16 says the king commanded Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions.

And the king declares to Daniel may your God whom you serve continually deliver you. In other words my hands are tied your only hope is the living God. Even Darius knows that the only hope is the living God.

And friends we dare not lean on political parties or influential friends or our own clever strategies because all of them will let us down sooner or later.

[11 : 48] But our living God is the one who delivers who holds us in his hands through all trials. So we place our hope in the living God alone.

And lastly the living God he prospers his people. So look at the last verse verse 28 with me. So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

And prospered here it doesn't mean simply that he's wealthy. The Aramaic word it has a double meaning. It means both being faithful and being fruitful.

Faithful and fruitful. So Daniel prospers in his faithfulness to the Lord serving him continually with thanksgiving and praise. And Daniel prospers in his fruitfulness for the Lord.

In other words he's a blessing to this kingdom of Babylon that he serves. He's a godly influence and a godly witness to the living God by his words and his actions.

[12 : 48] And thus Daniel is a man of integrity and steadfast godly character from all the way from his teens until at least into his 80s.

And what an amazing testimony he is to us of lifelong faithfulness. So as we close our time in the book of Daniel together there is this beautiful song that we're invited to sing.

A melody that we learn from the pages of Daniel. And we sing of the living God and of his son Jesus Christ enduring forever as king over all the earth.

He delivers and he rescues he comes to dwell in us uniting us with him as the temple of the living God. And as we cling to him he grows in us the gifts of new life.

These gifts that we see the thankfulness in my heart. Thankfulness to my living God. The hope that I place in him alone. And the prospering in faithfulness and in fruitfulness to the glory of his name.

[14 : 03] Amen.