Daniel 6:1-28

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Date: 24 August 2025

Preacher: Rev. James Wagner

[0:00] Before being seated, please pray with me. God, give to us this morning an increase of your grace. We may meekly hear your word, receive you with pure affection.

! Unfamiliar faces, lots of familiar ones.
My name's James, if you don't know me. And so grateful to have you with us this morning. And again, you're welcome to Palette afterwards. We continue this morning with our series in Daniel. Many of us are familiar with Daniel, especially if we grew up in the church. Like ours, we like to use Daniel, though not every year, for our Bible camp. And it was a text that was used this summer for Bible camp.
And the subtext of that was the clash of kings. Now, this morning isn't such a clash of kings, but I think in a way an aligning of kings.
[1:11] And you would have heard that about King Darius and his confession in faith to the God of Daniel. But there certainly is a clash that's going on, and it's between the servants of the kings.

And now there are powers and principalities that are clashing and rattling and roaring lions in this text today. And there's a lot of that going on these days in the principalities and the powers of the world in which we live.
Underneath, though, there are servants of the Lord, like you, called and challenged in the marketplaces. Politics, academics, medicine, all domains of life.
And Christians are tempted to worship other gods. But the story of Daniel is about the faithfulness, not of Daniel, though he is faithful and blameless, as we read this morning, but the faithfulness of God.
And that is to keep his servants true while being tested in their faith. So this morning we look at two matters of Christian faith, I think, and it's practiced from this. And first is that it's the law of God that distinguishes Daniel.
[2:23] And it's the living God who delivers his servant Daniel. So let's look at those two things. The law of God distinguishing his servants and the living God that delivers his servants.

Have a Bible in your hand. You can look down at chapter six of Daniel. So first, the law of God distinguishes his servants. Well, when do you come across the word distinguished these days? Almost never, it seems. Did a search on this, and there were a couple of films. One was called The Distinguished. It was a short film produced last year. And then there was an old one, not really a classic one, but called The Distinguished Gentleman.
Well, you might find it in the military, too. There are Distinguished Service Medals and Distinguished Service of the Cross. And then, of course, in education, there are the Distinguished Professors or Guest Lecturers.
It's not a word that we often use, though. We are more interested in fame than it is in being distinguished. But this word distinguished means marked by eminence or commanding respect, clarifying dignity, generative authority.
[3:38] And who comes to mind when you hear this word? Who do you think of when you think about maybe public figures when you hear the word distinguished? There are some there. Some are hidden in the rough.

Some are obvious, though many are not. This past week, James Dobson died. And there are many distinguished figures, Christian leaders, that have died in the past, it seems.
Well, Daniel was distinguished. Verse 3, we read, Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps. And there were only two other high officials and 120 satraps.
So he was distinguished above all the rest of them, but not by aspiration or even accident. King Darius identified something in Daniel that set him apart from all the others.

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And who would have guessed that the trouble this would bring Daniel? But of course it wasn't the first time. Anyone who rises to this status knows the positive position generates respect on one hand, but also jealousy on the other.
[4:52] And I don't know why anyone who would long for positions like this, including prime minister or a university president or a corporate executive or an archbishop, they all need our prayers because sometimes and not always their experience can be like Daniel's.

Daniel became then a target of those next to him, just two of them, but 120 underneath him. And despite his record by the admission of the other officials and satraps, Daniel was blameless.
Look at verse 4. It says, They could find no ground for complaint or any fault because he was faithful and no error or fault was found in him.
But that's not why they wanted Daniel's life. Jealousy was the motivation to get him fired, literally, in a previous scene, under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.
But under the reign of Darius, their motivation was, I think, in some ways quite contemporary.
Verses 6 to 10, Daniel's name is Daniel's name is Daniel's name.
[6:29] We want him to worship the king, who is their god. So we heard about the king's signature and the documents and the enactment of the injunction, but it didn't change Daniel's behavior because he kept praying three times a day like always.

This wasn't something a crisis came and, oh no, I need to pray like never before, right? Daniel just kept doing what he was always doing. And this change of law and junction in the land showed something of Daniel.
It was confrontational. But this confrontation didn't change Daniel's character. It didn't change his character, but it revealed it.
Daniel didn't have to start praying and make a decision, but he kept doing what he was always doing before. And this was a rule of life for Daniel practiced based on the law of God.
So Daniel's persecutors tried to use that against him for death. So it was the law of God expressed in Daniel's life as a rule of life where he continued to pray that they took issue with.
[7:37] And Daniel kept that law even if it would mean death. And this is what distinguished him and can distinguish us too. So that's the first thing.

The second thing, though, is the life of God delivers his servant Daniel and you and I, all of us. So the not-so-secret police, knowing Daniel's holy habits, saw and heard Daniel praying and petitioning like always.
And then they report this to Daniel, or sorry, to Darius. Listen to how they make their report in verse 13. 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.
The report has some truth to it, for sure, since Daniel makes a petition three times a day to his God. But it's mildly racist, this exile from Judah. And, of course, a false testimony.
Daniel paid great attention to the king, of course. It wasn't that he wasn't paying attention to him. Which is how he was respected, and why he was respected by the king. Now, you may have some experience with this.
[8:54] Maybe not at that high level, but have you ever been looked down upon because you're a Christian? Maybe professionally or socially, you're looked down on by others.

Not all the time. But Jesus expected this of his disciples. He knew that we would face this from time to time. Maybe even unto death.
But, of course, it was even worse for our Lord. His own people, the own leaders of his day, brought him before Pilate. And in Jesus' case, he was immediately arrested, of course, after praying three times in the Garden of Gethsemane.
Praying, not my will, but thy will be done. Submitting himself to the Lord. Submitting himself to his Father. Sinking his will with the Father's will.
To make sure it wasn't just what he wanted, and the Father didn't. Well, King Darius is faced with a dilemma that we read distresses him in verse 14.
[9:59] He sets his mind to deliver his faithful and innocent servant. He knows it. But the king and his men have trapped Darius, and, of course, Daniel. And Daniel's condemned to death by the law.

And thrown into the den of lions. Well, the stone is rolled over the mouth of this den like the stone that's rolled over the grave of Jesus after his crucifixion.

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But King Darius has deliverance on his mind. And the second time we hear this word deliver is in verse 16. It's the second of actually four times in this.
Verse 16 reads, The king declared to Daniel, May your God, whom you serve, continually deliver you. We don't know Daniel's prayer those three times over those 30 days in his room with a small window where they saw him.
But I think the king's is pretty clear. Even though we read the king rose the next morning, hoping his prayer for deliverance was answered, what does he find when he arrives at the den of death?
[11:15] In anguish, we're told he arrives at the den after what must have been, and we're also told, a sleepless night. In verse 20, O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to, and now the third time, deliver you from the lions?

Three times Daniel prayed. Three times the king names his own longing for Daniel's deliverance. Darius couldn't deliver Daniel the distinguished, the disciplined, and the devoted servant of God. And of course, Darius too. Daniel, who like Jesus was innocent, but not sinless, is nevertheless vindicated.
And Daniel gives testimony to the reason for his deliverance. It is the living God that delivers the servant, Daniel.
Condemned to death, but delivered to life, Daniel knows it's only because of the Lord. And so Daniel witnesses to this in verse 22.
[12:30] The lions have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him, and also before you, O king. I have done no harm.

Well, I don't know about you, but I wish I could make the claim that Daniel does, that I have done no harm. But only because of Jesus' death is that claim made available to me and all of us.
We can dare to be a Daniel. And while this story is about Daniel and inspiring to all believers, it's really about the living Lord, who delivers not just the innocent, but the holy one, Jesus Christ.
The holiness, the goodness, the righteousness, the beauty of the Lord, Jesus Christ, is credited to us, not because of us and who we are, because of Jesus and his death on the cross.
And unlike Daniel, though, Jesus was not spared death, but through death, delivers us. Daniel was delivered by angels and God, but were delivered by God because he came in the flesh and died for us on the cross.
[13:56] And that's how we're delivered. Well, Daniel's enemies and King Darius were condemned to death and cast to the lions. And their God couldn't deliver them, but King Darius gave credit to the living God who delivered Daniel and, of course, delivers us.

And he does it in these words in verse 25. He says, Peace be multiplied upon you. I make a decree that in my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.
Not before those lions. For he is the living God, enduring forever. His kingdom shall never be destroyed and his dominion shall be to no 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.
This king, not of the Jews, but of the Medes and the Persians, confessed faith in the God of Daniel, who is the living God who delivers, rescues, works signs and wonders, and, yes, saves.
[15:16] The trial, testing, even temptation of Daniel and you and I to capitulate or compromise, and Daniel could have done that, to worship other gods and not Jesus alone, is luring.

But loving the Lord Jesus Christ is what will distinguish and deliver us because God does that by his law and he does that by his word if we patiently endure, which we need to do.
So let me close with this idea of patient endurance. experience. Daniel was probably 80 plus years old when this happened. The long life of service.
Not many of us are there yet as I look around. Some are pretty close, but most of us are not. Daniel didn't get to this place of patient endurance by chance or accident.
While he was distinguished by the law and delivered by the living God, he was devoted to the love of God. And I think that is a big takeaway for us this morning.
[16:38] His patient endurance over the long haul expressed in devotion by prayer. God kept him by prayer and he was kept by prayer.

Teresa of Avila was a kind of Daniel in her day, though she didn't serve a king like Darius. She was a nun in a Carmelite monastic order and the author of a book called The Interior Castle.

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Listen to what she says about this matter of deliverance and patient endurance. She says, out of suffering comes the serious mind. out of salvation, the grateful heart.
Out of endurance, fortitude. Out of deliverance, faith. Patient endurance attends to all things.
Yep, when we suffer, when we're saved, when we endure, when we're delivered. Patient endurance. So Daniel, Teresa of Avila, you and me, patient endurance comes from the law of God and the living of God as we love our God through pace, through prayer, with patience.
[18:03] We speak to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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