Daniel: An Open Window to a Lion’s Den

Daniel 6

MPS God is sovereign and able to save all who trust in Him and to deliver those who live as a faithful witness for His glory.

OBJ Every person can trust God’s sovereignty to save and deliver as He leads because by Four Exhortations.

INTRO Many have heard this story, so it can be difficult to feel the tension of the story because you know the ending. And without understanding the tension, the saving act becomes less dramatic and convincing. But I want to begin by sharing the main point of today’s message, because you will be challenged in your faith to believe it throughout the whole message.

God is sovereign and able to save all who trust in Him and to deliver those who live as a faithful witness for His glory.

READ Daniel 6:1-5

*It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; 2and 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. 3Then 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. 4Then 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. 5Then 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.”* **Daniel 6:1-5**

[.1-5] King Darius set out to implement changes to protect his kingdom. He established 120 satraps and three high officials, of which Daniel was one. Because he distinguished himself by his excellent spirit, the king favored him so that he planned to set him over the whole kingdom. But the other two high officials and the satraps did not like this. They tried to stop the King’s plan by finding a complaint against Daniel, but they could find no fault because Daniel was faithful. They finally concluded that the only way they would find fault with Daniel was to find a way to make faithfulness to his God illegal.

Forty-plus years after we are introduced to Daniel, and what do we find out? Daniel has been faithful, so that those wanting to find fault with him cannot. He is so committed to God that the only way to make him criminal is to make faithfulness illegal. I don’t know what you want said of your life, but nothing higher could mark a life than what distinguished Daniel. Daniel shows that the best thing you can do to stand up for the Lord is not try to be first, but be faithful to God. Don’t worry about what everyone else wants or says, or posts on Social Media, but stay focused on trusting what God says in His Word. Do your best every day, take care of your business, and excel in your responsibility because you are living to serve the Lord Jesus.(Colossians 3:23-24) And remember this; the more you live to honor God’s name, the more you will be marked for other’s disdain. When you live faithful to the Lord Jesus, people will treat you poorly because of Him.(John 15:18-20b)

READ Daniel 6:6-9

*6Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, “O King Darius, live forever! 7All 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. 8Now, 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.” 9Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.* **Daniel 6:6-9**

[.6-9] **The insight of their conclusion provided their plan, make Daniel’s faithfulness illegal**. When the other high officials and all the satraps came before the king, they made it sound as if the whole world was united by their plan.(.7) Their plan included an extreme terminal punishment with enforcement emphasized because they knew who they were targeting for charges. They forego persuasion and move directly to coercion to force the King’s hand. It’s always compelling for a politician to believe “this is what everyone wants”. It just becomes dangerous and destructive when one’s advisors are willing to manipulate for personal benefit and gain. King Darius signed the document because it seemed best.

**Plans that oppose God’s law and one’s faithfulness to God are nothing new**. Agreement, compliance, or simple willingness to follow the crowd is no problem for the pluralist who believes every god is equal, or for the casual religious, agnostic, or atheist, who believes no god is exclusive. But for a follower of the true God, anything other than faithfulness is less than all that He is worthy of! Daniel shows what faithfulness looks like regardless of ordinance or injunction.

READ Daniel 6:10-13

*10When 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. 11Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. 12Then 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.” 13Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.”* **Daniel 6:10-13**

[.10-13] Daniel’s response demonstrates an intentionality in his actions here. “*When Daniel knew*…*he went…where he had windows*…*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.*” This verse tells us that Daniel simply did what he did every day, he prayed to the Lord, but this time was distinct because of what he knew. So, when he went to pray the men who in agreement had schemed to trap him were waiting. And what they saw was no surprise, Daniel was praying as always. They immediately went to the king to report, aka tattle, on what they had witnessed. In effort to press the king in his words, they have the king reaffirm his injunction before they reported what they saw. Then, in harshest way, they gladly reported that Daniel had broken the injunction. Daniel was not caught in the trap they set for him, but willingly walked into the place of His strength to bear a faithful witness for God. The most powerful witness a Christ-follower has is when their whole life is lived in whole devotion to God for all people to see.

TRANS And Daniel will need every ounce of that strength for the den of lions that await him.

READ Daniel 6:14-18

*14Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. 15Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.”*

*16Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!” 17And 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. 18Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.* **Daniel 6:14-18**

[.14-18] King Darius did not like what he heard. He thought so highly of Daniel that the text tells us he tried all day to rescue him, realizing he had been manipulated by the others but being powerless to do anything about it. At the end of the day the men in agreement came to the king to ensure he enforced the injunction, so the king commanded Daniel be thrown in the lion’s den. The king offers words of comfort to Daniel, a prayer you might say, that his God would deliver him. Then, a stone was laid over the mouth of the den and sealed with the king’s signet ring. The king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting, and he got no sleep that night. These verses record a powerful testimony to how Daniel had impacted King Darius, but not even the king could help Daniel. Amid the sobs and a sleepless night of the king, the story leaves the reader wondering, “would Daniel’s God be powerful enough to help him in the king’s den of lions?”

READ Daniel 6:19-28

*19Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. 20As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?” 21Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! 22My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.” 23Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. 24And 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.*

*25Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: “Peace be multiplied to you. 26I 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. 27He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.”*

*28So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.* **Daniel 6:19-28**

[.19-28] When day broke, no one was more relieved than King Darius. He ran to the den to check on Daniel, and as he drew near, he cried out in anguish in hope that Daniel had survived. What he found was that Daniel was far more than only alive, he had thrived. God sent an angel to shut the mouth of the lions because he was found blameless, both before God and King Darius, and no harm was on him because he trusted in God. King Darius brought Daniel out of the den, then he threw those who maliciously accused Daniel in, with their whole families. They didn’t fare so well. They didn’t even make it to the bottom of the den before every bone in their bodies were broken. Evidently, those lions were hungry after not having eaten all night! King Darius made a decree for all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell on the earth, that Daniel’s God is the true and living God worthy of all praise. God delivered His faithful servant to be exalted in service among all people.

God is sovereign and able to save all who trust in Him and to deliver those who live as a faithful witness for His glory.

Daniel testifies that God is sovereign to save and deliver. Consider how the text exalts Jesus through the life of Daniel.

Gospel **Daniel was filled with an excellent spirit and found faithful regarding the law of God**. He served God faithfully no matter what he was confronted by. And when he was unjustly accused and condemned by the schemes of evil men, he did not fear but followed, even to the den of death where a stone was sealed over his life. When the king came calling the next morning, Daniel was well rested and walked out of the den unharmed to be exalted by the King to new glory.

**Jesus came from God full of grace and truth**. He lived a perfect life such that no fault could be found in Him.(Mark 14:55f; John 19:4) But when falsely accused, condemned, and sentenced to die(Matthew 26:3-4), instead of arguing his case, Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father.(Matthew 26:39, 42) Once crucified, he was laid in a tomb whose entrance was covered by a stone and sealed. And on the third day, he rose from the grave to be exalted by the Father.(Philippians 2:9-11) The one Daniel reveals is the only One in whom we walk to follow God; in Jesus we are saved and sent in His Name to bear a faithful witness to His glory wherever He leads. Daniel was delivered to point us to Jesus who was be raised to show that the God who saves from the den of lions also resurrects from the grave of sin’s death.

Daniel also models how to trust God as he points us to the One who is worthy of our whole life, Jesus Christ.

OBJ FOUR EXHORTATIONS to trust God’s sovereignty and live as a faithful witness to all people.

**Exhortation #1:** Strive to live in peace with all people to bear your faithful witness.

Hebrews 12:14 instructs, “*Strive for peace with everyone, and for holiness*”. Peter also instructs Christians, “*let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it*.”(1 Peter 3:11) Christians strive to live peaceful lives in the world to demonstrate the peace we have been given with God through Jesus Christ. But while our peace with God is sovereignly given, peace with man sometimes has to be made. What Daniel models and these verses teach is that we are not to hallow peace at all costs, particularly above faithfulness to Jesus, because the peace we strive for with everyone is married with our holiness that comes only by the Lord Jesus.

Living at peace with others in this world, as the Bible instructs, is never an absolute, like living at peace with God, because while it is our constant pursuit, it will not always be our immediate reality. Romans 12:18 instructs, “*If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*” The Scriptures qualify our peaceful living because God’s eternal wisdom knows the one who prowls like a roaring lion is coming for those who follow Him. Sometimes the very peace God has given to each one who trust in Jesus is the \*spark\* that ignites war in this world.

ILLUS I recently read of scientists studying Zebras. In observing, they struggled to distinguish individuals in the herd, so they started painting a red blotch on the one they wanted to follow and study. Not long after, the painted one was attacked, killed, and eaten by lions. So, they painted another one, only to have it quickly meet the same end. After several zebras the scientists paused to ask what was going on. They realized that the very sign that distinguished the zebra for study made it easy for the lions to single out, hunt and capture. The stripes of zebras that make them all look alike also causes them to blend together and look like one, and that becomes their safety and security from the predators attack.

In Jesus Christ, we have been given peace with God and instructed to live in peace with other people, as much as is possible. But of this you can be certain; Satan prowls like a lion to devour those whose lives are “painted with the blood of Jesus”. So, Christian, as one whose life has been marked by Jesus, He has ordained that the strength of your security rests in the community of His followers, the church, where the whole flock becomes One by His blood-stained stripes to rise up in victory over the Enemy’s attack.

The peace God calls for us to have among one another as the church, as Christian brothers and sisters, is the basis for, but not the full manifestation of, the peace He calls us to strive toward in our living in the world. If we do not hold a mind to suffer for the sake of faithfulness to Jesus Christ, then it is not the gospel that holds us, but some lesser hope that deceives. Christian, not every hill is one to be ready to die on. So strive to live at peace with all people. But the hill called Calvary upon which our Lord gave His life for you is ALWAYS One to take a stand and live for! And whether or not it holds a cross for you, you can leave that in the hands of our sovereign God, to determine as He wills, and for you to know as you trust and follow Him.

**Exhortation #2:** A life of full devotion to Jesus is the Christ-follower’s power for faithful witness.

Daniel went back to his prayer room because as much as he didn’t aim to incite it, he knew war was coming. So, he went to get armored up in prayer. Many questions could capture our attention here, but two are of particular importance to capture Daniel’s full devotion. The first question addresses Daniel’s hope. Why it was important for Daniel to face Jerusalem? We do not fully know. What we can say is that the restoration of Jerusalem represented God’s promised hope, and therefore, likely served as a main focus of his life and prayers in following God. The second question begins more practically but addresses the motivation for his faithfulness, “Why didn’t he just shut the windows?” This strikes at the heart of what the text tells us. Daniel’s faithfulness rested in his intentionality to ensure that we are told; Daniel knew what he was doing, and that’s why he did it. He knew the practice of his faith had been made illegal, at least for a time. He knew his faithfulness was going to cost him, that they would be watching him, and were coming for him. But he also knew that his strength to stand would come from the same practice that sounded the alarms of persecution, his time with God in prayer. Daniel made a statement by his prayer, that the law of man would never supercede the law of God in his life. Another way we can say this would be to say that the fear of man would never overwhelm His fear of God; that any desire for the applause of people would never be greater than His desire to please God; or that the threat of man’s injunction against him would never be a greater motivation than God’s love for him. Daniel knew that what got him into this situation was the only thing that would get him through it, power from God. So he prayed for all to see so all would know that it was God’s power when He got delivered.

Can an instant of praise withheld, that can be re-ignited once the threat has passed, be all that damaging? What harm is there in praise silenced only for a moment, to be restarted again? We typically ask, “what could it hurt?”, aiming for the conclusion, “not much”. But the harm is this, God is worthy of our praise and thanksgiving every moment, every second of every day, and any concession not only of idolatry indulged but even of praise withheld or silenced is to steal His glory. It is the decision of this very nature, of only an instance, that leads one into sexual immorality and adultery, into addiction, and into every form of indulgence that ruins and damns life. And when God is not worthy of your every second of faith and obedience, He’ll only be worthy of any moment when you decide He is; which makes you god over Him. That’s convenient faith that deceives, not saving faith. God is either worthy of your praise and honor and all glory every second of your life, or He is not worthy to be bothered with any more than any other demand in your life. But to know and trust Him is to say, “He is worthy of my full, undivided devotion by obedience from my whole life, and of my faithful witness never silenced!

**The most radical thing Daniel did was kneel and pray in front of an open window**. If we were as deeply devoted to our freedom to access God’s presence in private as we fight for our liberty to do so publicly, the church would look radically different and hold a radically different influence on the culture than we do today. Like Daniel, we would not be without attack, but we would be without prayerlessness. We would not be without the war of the spiritual realm that rages in this world, but we would be without the fear to engage the battle. I am all for the fight for religious liberty as the first inalienable right of every human being, and I believe it is a worthy fight. But my life calling is the fight for the fervent and faithful prayer of our people from an undivided devotion. Daniel held great influence with the king just for who He was. There is no substitute for true godly character to the core. People bent on selfish pride and gain feared Daniel for the same reason, that he lived his whole life to testify to One who was worthy of His full, undivided devotion. Daniel’s prayers were powerful not because he made a big deal out of his routine, but because he made a priority to do it.

**Prayer should be our regular and constant conversation with Jesus, not just when we feel we need it**. If you only pray when you feel like it, **1**you will never feel like praying because **2**you will never feel like prayer will work, and because **3**you don’t know what it does, that it works to produce the will of God in you by conforming you to God’s will. And, if you seldom or never pray, you need not worry about the Lion’s den. You will never bother to challenge the edicts by which you are decreed to bow down in this world. Daniel returned to the only place he knew would be sufficient to strengthen him for what lay ahead of him, to set his eyes and fill his heart, mind, and life on his highest hope, the promised salvation of the One, true God.

**Exhortation #3:** Stand when confronted in your faith because that’s where God uses your witness for His glory.

When Daniel was called to account and condemned as guilty, there are no words recorded that he spoke. He had already made his statement and taken his stand. What was to be done to him he was ready to faithfully endure. Christian, don’t be shocked when persecution and hardship comes. And never back down from bearing witness to your relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Where the accusation and condemnation of the world’s unbelief confronts your devotion to Jesus Christ will be the place and moment God uses to glorify Himself through you by your faithful witness.

**Rather, take your stand by understanding that God is working**. God empowers and leads His people into hard things and dark places because that’s where He works to rescue people. Sin creates hard situations and dark places that call for someone to go into lion’s dens, into fiery furnaces, and other hard places, to bring the good news of God’s light, hope, and salvation. You need not worry, Christian, God’s got you. And that’s why He sends you to go get other people!

Where you run when you are afraid ultimately reveals what you worship when are at peace. Where you draw strength when you are weak, beat down, or threatened, reveals the source from which you draw life. If you draw from anything other than God, you will always batten down the hatches when the storms of life blow, because nothing other than God will be able to carry you through. Have you thought about where you will run when the practice of your faith gets criminalized? Stand faithfully when you are confronted in your faith, Christian, because that’s where God will use your witness for the glory of His Name.

**Exhortation #4:** Stay focused on Jesus and know He will deliver because He is sovereign.

Just as Daniel set his eyes on Jerusalem to focus his prayer, so you too, Christian, should set your eyes on the only One in whom is all your hope found, Jesus Christ. The lion’s den didn’t create fear in Daniel because he didn’t allow it to consume his heart. His heart was full of hope in God, and that set his mind at peace. Do you know what Daniel did focus on? The dawn. That’s right, the dawn. As soon as he walked in to the lion’s den and saw their mouths shut, he knew God had delivered him. Daniel was free to enjoy the night, looking forward to the dawn, when the king would return to the den to find that God had delivered him. The Christian’s hope is not to avoid every dark night of hardship, suffering, or persecution, but to know Jesus walks with us into any den of danger we face, and with Him watch for the dawn when God, in His perfect timing, brings the glorious victory of His salvation in and through our life.

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CLOSE

Many people don’t stand up for God because they don’t want to stand out in the crowd. But the crowd is exactly who God sends His followers to, to tell of His power. When we live to tell the world “He is worthy”, we will find that He is able when the opportunity for His power to be displayed in us comes. God is able to save – from the death sentence of the Evil One’s scheme, from the scheme of many “in agreement” against you, and from anything that arises to threaten you. Following Jesus is seldom a walk in the park, but it may include a visit to the zoo!

If God gave you a view of His Will for your future, even for the next few days, what would you do with it? What if he took you to a window and said, “See that Lion’s Den? I’m going to put you in it.” Would you be good? God does give every follower of Jesus a window through which He shows us how to follow Him, one day, one step, one moment, one decision at a time, first in communion with Him, then in fellowship with His people, and finally in faithful witness to all people.

What’s stopping you from following God where He leads so His power can be displayed in your life?

Christ-follower, I pray for you because God is calling you to great faithfulness and sending you for great witness.