

In The Lions' Den

Introduction. Daniel is one of the most courageous and faithful men in history. In Daniel 6 we get to spend a day in the life of the prime minister of the Medo-Persian Empire -- Daniel the "beloved" (9:23; 10:11, 19). In this chapter, Daniel is a man in his eighties. It proves that age is no barrier to serving Christ, but it is also not a protection against temptation and testing.

I. ***A Dawn Of Devotion (vss. 1-3)***

- A. With the emergence of the Medo-Persian Empire, the need arose to organize the vast territory. This organization was meant to minimize the king's loss of territory due to uprisings, or in taxation due to graft or bribery.
- B. God had honored Daniel for his faithfulness, and Darius was so impressed with Daniel that he was going to make him the second ruler in the land.
- C. In obedience to the law of the land Daniel was impeccable. However, his first allegiance was to God. Daniel's promotion is proof that a Christian does not have to compromise to succeed (Matthew 6:33).

II. ***A Morning Of Deception (vss. 4-9)***

- A. The wicked always hate the just (Psalm 34:21). The wicked lie about God's people (Proverbs 13:5; 29:12). The rulers told Darius that all the officials agreed on the plan, when Daniel had never been consulted.
- B. The inexperienced king could hardly have been expected to realize that some ulterior motive prompted this show of loyalty. He therefore signed the document which made him god-king for 30 days, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked (cf. Esther 1:19; 8:8).

III. ***A Noon Of Decision (vss. 10-13)***

- A. Daniel was going to face one of the greatest tests of his life, and his mind was already made up. He would serve the Lord and pray to God just as he had always done. Prayer was not accidental in Daniel's life; it was essential (Matthew 26:41; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2). He could have made excuses and compromised. He could have said, "Everybody was doing it." He could have thought that he had served the Lord all his life -- one little compromise at the end could not do too much damage. He could have thought that he would be more useful to the Lord alive than dead. However, it was his faithfulness that made him one of God's "beloved" ones (John 14:21-23).

- B. When reflecting on the account of Daniel and the lions' den, most people usually focus on his courage in the lions' den itself. Before the lions' den, 153 verses are used to describe his life, but what is curiously missing from the account is any description of Daniel's experience in the lions' den; and the reason is because Daniel's courage and faith in the lions' den is not the point.
- C. Daniel's courage and faith was shown in the way he lived that got him thrown into the lions' den. The remarkable part of the account was when his enemies were looking for a way to accuse him but failed.

IV. A Sundown Of Disappointment (vss. 14-17)

- A. Darius's response was not what the conspirators had expected. Indeed, he was greatly distressed, probably realizing that he had been manipulated by Daniel's enemies. Darius had labored all the previous day to save Daniel from judgment.
- B. The king realized what a fool he had been, but even his power and wealth could not alter the law of the Medes and Persians. God did not want Darius to deliver Daniel; that was a privilege He was reserving for Himself.
- C. Daniel was not depending on the king either (Psalm 146:1-6). He had learned long ago to trust the living God. God did not want to save Daniel from the lions' den; He wanted to deliver him out of it.

V. A Night Of Deliverance (vss. 18-23)

- A. What a contrast between Darius in his palace and Daniel in the lion's den. Darius could have been slain by some enemy right in his bedroom, but Daniel was in a place of perfect safety because God was with him and because of his faith (Hebrews 11:33).
- B. It is amazing that he had any faith at all, after living in that idolatrous land for so many years. His daily fellowship with the Lord was the secret (Psalm 18:17-21). In every way, Daniel was reigning as king while Darius was a slave.
- C. Christians face many temptations to compromise, and it often appears that the "safest" course is to go with the crowd. Satan will try to use our enemies to destroy us (2 Timothy 4:17). Daniel would rather die obeying God's word than live outside of God's will.

VI. A Morning Of Destruction (vss. 24-28)

- A. We revolt at the thought of whole families, including children, being thrown to hungry lions. But this was the law of the land, the same law that these wicked men had tried to use against Daniel. How tragic that their innocent children had to suffer; however, such are the awful penalties of sin (Psalm 37:1-2, 12-15; Proverbs 11:8).

B. Now we see why God allowed Daniel to go through this experience. It brought great glory to His name (cf. Daniel 3:29; 4:3). When Christians overcome temptation, they always glorify the Lord, even if only the angels and demons are watching (1 Peter 3:10-17). May we want Christ to be magnified in our bodies (Philippians 1:20).

Conclusion. Most people want a lions' den experience. They want to see God do something huge in their life. But most people will never have the opportunity to prove God's faithfulness in the lions' den because they have not proved their faith in everyday life.

They are not going to see God come through for them in a huge way financially because they have not learned to trust Him with a portion of what they have. They are not going to see increased favor at work because they segregate God from their work. They are not going to see God use them in powerful ways at their school because they live in such a way that no one knows they even believe in God.

Do not try to be like Daniel in the lions' den. Be like Daniel who prayed every day and had integrity. Be like Daniel and serve God in every aspect of your life. Have the courage and faith to live in such a way that God actually has a platform from which to show His faithfulness.