



Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

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Chapter 6: Daniel in the Lions' Den

6:1-3, Daniel Serving under Darius

It pleased Darius: “Darius” as mentioned at the end of Chapter 5 is Darius the Mede, who is thought to have served under Cyrus, though there are some scholars who believe this is actually a Chaldean reference to Cyrus himself. It’s also possible that Darius was a son of Cyrus (some suggest Cambyses). It’s also entirely possible that “Darius” is not a personal name, but more of a title that means “holder of the scepter”. Some secular documents refer to a ruler named Gubaru whom Cyrus appointed as ruler over Babylon immediately after its capture. This last possibility seems most likely, though ultimately the exact identity of this man is not as important as the position he held.

Daniel distinguished himself: Daniel was one of three leaders appointed to lead under Darius as direct reports, and he outperformed the other two because “he had an excellent spirit.” We’re not given the details about that, but are probably safe in assuming that Daniel had a good attitude and high level of integrity when it came to his work. So much so that this made him a mark for attack by those who performed to standards lower than his!

6:4-9, The Plot against Daniel is Conceived

They could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful: Daniel didn’t provide an opening for his opponents in the quality or quantity of his work, or even the content of his character. It’s hard to imagine examining the work, life, and character of any public servant who has held office some 50 years and finding nothing wrong – no scandals, poor performance, family issues.... (Okay, I’ll stop

now before I get into serious trouble. 😊) Suffice it to say it is remarkable that Daniel had no skeletons in his closet that his opponents could use as leverage against him.

We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God: Ah, so these men did know Daniel well. They knew he could not be trapped by charges of evil-doing, but they also knew that he would be faithful to his God in any and all circumstances.

Whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king: So Daniel's enemies knew him, but they *also* knew Darius. They knew they could appeal to Darius' pride and his desire for a truly unified kingdom under his leadership.

All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together: When we were children we called this the "Everyone else is doing it!" defense. In logic and philosophy classes they call it *argumentum ad populum* (which is Latin for "Everyone else is doing it!") It's a phenomenon we see throughout history, where people do or believe (or are persuaded to do or believe) things they wouldn't normally do or believe, because they think everyone else approves of those things – even terrible, evil things.

Now, there's no evidence they actually did this; they lied when they said all the governors, satraps, etc. "have consulted together". No, they didn't. How do we know? Because Daniel was one of the governors, and he most certainly was not consulted.

So that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians: It was an established principle in ancient societies, including the Medo-Persian Empire, that when a king formally signed and instituted a decree, it was so binding that not even the king himself could change it. In part the decrees of a Persian king were unchangeable because he was thought to speak for the gods, who could never be wrong and thus never needed to change their minds.

6:10-15, Daniel's Faithfulness to God Results in His Condemnation

When Daniel knew that the writing was signed: Daniel was a loyal subject of his king, yet he held a higher loyalty to God. Daniel refused to give to the government an act of obedience that belonged to God alone. His neighbors

probably (and rightly!) considered it risky for Daniel to continue his custom of praying to God openly (not *publicly*, but in his upper room, with windows open toward Jerusalem). But Daniel knew that the *safest* thing he could do was obey God. Note that he didn't let the decree alter his actions one way or the other. He didn't "show off" and pray more to make a point; he simply continued his (pretty excellent!) prayer life.

It's easy to understand to see why people are authority-pleasers. Agreeing with or at least not countering those who have the power to hire or fire us, to break our hearts, to slander us, to make our lives generally miserable, is a natural and human way of dealing with such situations. The power to obey God and stand for Him comes not from within us; this kind of courage is that which God Himself plants and nourishes within us. It's only through faith that we can truly accept that God really is in control.

Found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God: They found Daniel just as they knew they would – deep in prayer. For Daniel, prayer was both communion with God and pleading for His will to be accomplished.

Does not show due regard for you, O king: This of course was not true at all. Daniel intended no disrespect for the king, but rather a *higher* respect for God.

And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself: I like this about Darius. He did not blame others; he knew that he had been tricked and was at fault. Even though he might've been fuming at Daniel's opponents, he knew that ultimately he was responsible for the situation he now found himself in.

He labored till the going down of the sun: In other words, he worked as long as he could. According to ancient eastern custom, an execution was carried out on the evening of the day that the accusation was made and found valid.

6:16-18, Daniel in the Lions' Den

Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you: Darius appears to have a faith of sorts born out of Daniel's trust in God. The idea here is, "I tried my best to save you Daniel, but I failed. Now it is up to your God."

His sleep went from him: It sounds like Daniel had a better night's rest than Darius! It's safe to say that Daniel prayed in the lions' den, because it was simply his habit to pray. He did not need to start praying on this remarkable occasion because the habit of prayer was well ingrained in his life.

Charles Spurgeon wonders if Daniel prayed from Psalm 22:21-22:

Save me from the mouth of the lion!

You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!

I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation

I will praise you:

"In any case he must have had a glorious night. What with the lions, and with angels all night to keep him company, he was spending the night-watches in grander style than Darius."

6:19-23, Daniel Survives the Night in the Lions' Den

Very early in the morning: Since he couldn't sleep, it made sense that Darius rose early to see what had transpired. You can imagine him waiting for the first glimmer of dawn so he could see how Daniel fared.

God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouth: It's not clear from the text if Daniel saw an angel or not, but he certainly knew that God sent His angel to rescue him. Hebrews 1:14 says angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation. God sent an angel to serve Daniel's need.

I have done no wrong before you: Daniel did in fact break the king's law, but he did not go against the king or against the king's best interests. Daniel provides an example of obedient disobedience.

Because he believed in his God: Daniel was preserved through faith. Though his cause was righteous and he was unjustly accused, those things alone did not protect him before the lions. Daniel needed a living, abiding faith in God, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Because of this faith, Daniel is recognized in Hebrews 11:33 as one who by faith stopped the mouths of lions.

6:24, The Fate of Daniel's Opponents

The king gave the command: No one had to ask Darius to do this. He was ready and willing to bring justice to those who plotted against Daniel, and also to their children, and their wives.

This was terribly harsh, but it was also according to ancient customs among the Persians.

Commentator David Guzik:

An ancient writer named Ammianus Marcellinus wrote of the Persians, "The laws among them are formidable... by which, on account of the guilt of one, all the kindred perish."

Darius was not happy with these men because they'd manipulated him. He probably would have cast these men and their families to the lions even if Daniel had died!

The lions overpowered them... before they ever came to the bottom of the den:

This shows us that it was genuinely angelic protection that saved Daniel. It proves there was no natural reason why the lions did not eat Daniel. Daniel's accusers perished in the same trap they had set for Daniel.

6:25-28, Darius Decrees that All Must Honor the God of Daniel

Then King Darius wrote: What a familiar pattern this has become in the Book of Daniel! God's people stand firm in their convictions, God honors and protects them, and the testimony of God's work makes the ungodly see and tell of the greatness of God:

- Daniel and his three companions stood firm and Nebuchadnezzar saw the fruit of it (1:20)
- Daniel boldly and wisely interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the king honored Daniel and his God (2:46-47)
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood firm and Nebuchadnezzar gave glory to God (3:28-30)
- Daniel boldly told Nebuchadnezzar the truth and the king humbled himself and gave glory to God (4:34-37)
- Daniel stood firm and boldly told Belshazzar the truth and the king honored Daniel (5:29)

Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian: This is one reason that some scholars think that Darius was the Persian king Cyrus. The point, though, is that Daniel was protected by God yet again, and again prospered.

This chapter also draws some very interesting parallels to Jesus Christ:

- A man without blame, faithful to God in all his ways, a man noted for prayer, was sent to his death because of the jealousy of those who wanted to prevent his exaltation
- He was condemned to death by plotting of his enemies and the law of the land, and thrown into a stone room meant to be his tomb
- A stone was rolled over the opening. But in all its power and ferocity, death couldn't touch him
- On a morning the stone was rolled away, he came out victoriously
- He glorified God
- The pagans gave honor to God
- His enemies were judged

It might not be a perfect fit, but it certainly makes an interesting foreshadowing of Christ!