Daniel Study | Week 3

Daniel 6: Faithfulness in the Lion's Den

The Big Picture

Daniel 3 and Daniel 6 intentionally follow a similar pattern: faithfulness, persecution, apparent death, divine deliverance, and the king acknowledging God's greatness.

- The repetition presents a pattern for God's people living faithfully in exile.

Theme: Faithfulness to God in the midst of exile

Big Idea: God's people can remain faithful in the midst of pagan kingdoms because God is the true King, and His Kingdom will ultimately prevail.

Big Question: How should God’s people live while earthly kingdoms rule?

The central lesson is faithfulness under pressure. Daniel 6 does not primarily teach us how to escape difficult circumstances. It teaches us how to remain faithful to God when difficult circumstances come.

Daniel is literally an exile. Jerusalem has been conquered, the temple has been plundered, and Israelites have been taken into captivity.

Yet Daniel does not withdraw from society. He serves within this pagan empire, works for pagan kings, and participates in government while refusing to give the government what belongs exclusively to God.

Daniel's framework: Engage without compromise.

Daniel's Excellent Character

Daniel 6:1–5

> *Daniel 6:1–5 — It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, with three high officials over them, of whom Daniel was one. Daniel became distinguished above the others because an excellent spirit was in him. The officials sought a ground for complaint, but could find none because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. They concluded they would find no ground for complaint unless it concerned the law of his God.*

Three Areas of Daniel's Excellent Character

- **He was competent.** Daniel was diligent and faithful with his earthly responsibilities.
- **He was trustworthy.** His enemies searched for corruption and found none.
- **He was uncompromising in devotion to God.**
- Daniel's enemies knew exactly where his loyalty was: “the law of his God.”
- Daniel's faith is not something he pulls out only when trouble comes. It is woven into his life.
- His enemies' inability to find legitimate fault is a powerful picture of integrity.
- **Character is built before the crisis.** (Dan. 6:10)

The Plot Against Daniel

Daniel 6:6–9

> *The high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and proposed an ordinance that whoever made petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to the king, would be cast into the den of lions. They urged Darius to sign it so it could not be changed according to the law of the Medes and Persians. Darius signed the document.*

- The king becomes the object of worship.
- The book of Daniel repeatedly shows human rulers attempting to elevate themselves.
- Daniel refuses to give a human king what belongs to God.

Daniel Doesn't Change His Routine

Daniel 6:10–15

> *When Daniel knew 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.***

- Daniel discovers the decree and prays. The key phrase is: “as he had done previously.”
- Daniel did not begin praying because the government told him not to. He prayed because he already belonged to God.
- You do not build character in the crisis. The crisis reveals the character you built beforehand.
- Daniel does not know whether God will save him. He simply knows that God is able to and worthy of his obedience and worship.
- Know God so deeply that you remain faithful even when the lion's den is unavoidable.

Why Did Daniel Face Jerusalem?

- Daniel could have closed the windows, prayed secretly, or stopped for thirty days. Instead, he continues his normal practice.
- Daniel prayed with his windows open toward Jerusalem. This is not because Jerusalem possessed magical power. His prayer direction connects with Israel's covenant hope and with Solomon's prayer concerning exiles praying toward Jerusalem in 1 Kings 8:46–50.

When Obedience to God Conflicts With Human Authority

Daniel 6:11–18

> *Daniel's accusers found him praying and reminded the king of the injunction. The king confirmed that the law could not be revoked. Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" A stone was laid over the den and sealed.*

- Daniel prays three times a day just as David did. (Psalm 55:17)

  "Evening and morning and at noon, I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice." — Psalm 55:17

- Romans 13 teaches respect for governing authorities, but Scripture establishes a higher authority. When human authorities directly command God's people to disobey God, God's people must remain faithful to God. Peter later states, "We must obey God rather than men." — Acts 5:29
- Daniel does not become violent or attempt to overthrow Darius. He simply continues obeying God.
- Biblical courage is not lawlessness. Daniel honors the king while refusing to worship the king.

The king spends the night worrying in fear.

Daniel spends the night in faith.

God Shuts the Lions' Mouths

Daniel 6:19–22

> *At break of day, the king hurried to the den and cried out, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" Daniel answered that his God had sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and that they had not harmed him.*

- **Keep in mind, one angel is enough.**
- In 2 Kings 19:35 one angel struck down an army of 185,000 Assyrians.
- A major theme in Daniel is the contrast between God's rule and human kingdoms that become beast-like through pride and rebellion. Daniel 7 makes this imagery explicit.

The Irony of the Lion's Den

- A human being is thrown to beasts because he refuses to become like the beast (earthly kingdom).
- Daniel refuses to worship the king and God demonstrates that the true King has authority over the beasts.

Daniel Is Delivered

Daniel 6:23–24

> *The king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. Daniel was unharmed because he had trusted in his God. The men who had maliciously accused Daniel were then brought and cast into the den of lions.*

Darius Proclaims the Greatness of God

Daniel 6:25–28

> *King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. I 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."*
>
> *"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."*

So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

- Darius's final proclamation describes Daniel's God as the living God, enduring forever, ruler over an everlasting kingdom, a God who rescues and delivers, and the God who performs signs and wonders.
- The earthly king ends up proclaiming the greatness of the heavenly King.
- Babylon is not ultimate. Persia is not ultimate. Darius is not ultimate. **God's Kingdom is ultimate.**

Daniel and Jesus

> *There are also major differences. Daniel was rescued from death; Jesus actually died. Daniel eventually died naturally; Jesus conquered death through resurrection.*

- Daniel was falsely accused; Jesus was falsely accused.
- Daniel was opposed by jealous leaders; Jesus was opposed by jealous leaders.
- Daniel was declared innocent; Jesus was declared innocent by Pilate.
- Daniel was placed in a sealed den; Jesus was placed in a sealed tomb.
- Daniel was delivered by God; Jesus conquered death through resurrection.

Jesus is the greater Daniel.

Biblical conclusion: Daniel's deliverance provides a pattern that points forward to God's ultimate victory through Jesus Christ.

What Daniel Teaches Us About Prayer

Daniel 6:10–15

- **Prayer should be habitual.** Daniel prayed as he had done previously.
- **Prayer should include thanksgiving.** Daniel gave thanks even after the decree was signed.
- **Prayer gives us courage.** His circumstances did not immediately change, but his relationship with God remained steady.
- **Prayer prepares us for obedience.** It brings our hearts into submission to God.
- **Prayer is not a guarantee of an easy life.** Daniel prayed and still entered the lions' den.

Big Idea

God's people can remain faithful in the midst of pagan kingdoms because God is the true King, and His Kingdom will ultimately prevail.