

**Daniel:**  
**Conviction in an Age of Compromise**

**The Lions in Daniel's Den**

*Daniel 6:16b-28*

**Rev. Freddy Fritz**

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## The Lions in Daniel's Den

### Scripture

Today I would like to conclude my sermon series in the book of Daniel. Actually, I am concluding my sermon series at the end of chapter 6. The reason I am not carrying on with chapter 7 is because Daniel 7-12 deals with various visions that Daniel had. There is no unified consensus as to what these visions mean, and I do not know what they mean either. So, rather than speculate and guess at the meaning of these visions, I will rather not tackle them at this stage. When I figure out what Daniel's visions mean, then I will return and preach on Daniel 7-12!

So, with that in mind, please listen as I read Daniel 6:16b-28:

**<sup>16b</sup> The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"**

**<sup>17</sup> A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. <sup>18</sup> Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.**

**<sup>19</sup> At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. <sup>20</sup> When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"**

**<sup>21</sup> Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup> My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."**

**<sup>23</sup> The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.**

**<sup>24</sup> At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den,**

**along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.**

**<sup>25</sup> Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land:**

**“May you prosper greatly!**

**<sup>26</sup> “I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.**

**“For he is the living God  
and he endures forever;  
his kingdom will not be destroyed,  
his dominion will never end.**

**<sup>27</sup> He rescues and he saves;  
he performs signs and wonders  
in the heavens and on the earth.  
He has rescued Daniel  
from the power of the lions.”**

**<sup>28</sup> So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. (Daniel 6:16-30)**

## **Introduction**

Dr. Madison Sarratt taught mathematics at Vanderbilt for many years. Before giving a test, he would put things in perspective for his students by admonishing his class with these words:

Today I am giving two examinations: one in trigonometry, and the other in honesty. I hope you will pass them both. But, if you must fail one, fail trigonometry. There are many good people in the world who cannot pass trigonometry, but there are no good people in the world who cannot pass the examination of honesty.

It doesn't take long to realize that the really important tests in life come long after school is out. Many times the tests are painful.

And sometimes they are like pop exams—they take us by surprise!

That’s why the apostle Peter wrote: “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you” (1 Peter 4:12).

Referring to trials, the apostle Peter also said, “These [trials] have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:7).

As we come today to the end of our study of Daniel’s life, we should not be surprised to find that he now finds himself facing what is probably the greatest test of his life.

## Review

In our study of Daniel 6:1-16a last time, we saw that Daniel was now serving under a new king named Darius. Like the many kings before him, king Darius soon came to recognize Daniel’s great wisdom and personal integrity. Daniel, who was now approaching 90 years of age, became king Darius’ trusted friend. So Darius chose Daniel to be one of only three administrators who governed his kingdom.

Daniel so excelled at his position that the king decided to put him solely in charge of the whole government. That didn’t go over too well with the other cabinet members and high officials. In their jealousy, they tried to discredit Daniel by conducting an exhaustive background search in order to dig up some dirt from his past. That plan failed. Daniel was too much of a man of integrity.

They then decided that the only way they could trap Daniel was somehow to use his religious convictions against him. So they contrived a devious, yet ingenious, plan. The officials appealed to the king’s pride by challenging him to issue a royal decree, one that could not be altered, that would result in the execution of anyone in the kingdom who would pray to any god but to him.

The king's pride trapped him. So he issued an unchangeable decree that said the lions' den was for anyone who would not worship him alone. Little did the king know that, in issuing such an unchangeable decree, he was endangering the very life of his trusted friend Daniel.

As expected, it took Daniel's peers no time at all to find him guilty of praying to his God. Daniel was then convicted of violating the king's decree and ordered to be thrown into the lions' den—all apart from the king's desire. But they had Daniel—and Darius!—on a legal technicality.

### Lesson

So Daniel was now facing his greatest test yet! In our study of this test I want you to see two very important truths that are meant by God to help you through the tests that you will inevitably face in life.

#### **I. God's Tests Are Often Designed to Confront You with the Reality of Your Own Human Limitations**

First, God's tests are often designed to confront you with the reality of your own human limitations.

Humanly speaking, Daniel's situation was without hope. Verse 16 tells us that he had just been thrown into the lions' den.

There were three limiting factors that made for a humanly impossible situation here. The first limiting factor was the law of that day (referred to in verse 15 as the law of the Medes and Persians.) This law dictated that a king's decree could never be revoked—not even by the king himself.

The second limiting factor was the stone referred to in verse 17. This large stone was placed over the mouth of the den to ensure that there was no physical way for Daniel to escape.

The third limiting factor facing Daniel was the placement of the royal seals on the secured den. Verse 17 tells us that **“the king**

**sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed."** The king and his nobles took moist clay and sealed it over the stone, pressing their signet rings into the clay so that if someone did try to save Daniel, they would first have to break the seals, which would have brought upon them the decree of their own execution.

Every precaution was taken to make sure that the deliverance of Daniel was humanly impossible. No one could rescue him. Not even the king! Daniel's close relationship with the king didn't make any difference now.

Daniel had a very close relationship with king Darius. Some have said that the story of the lions' den is as much about Darius as it is about Daniel. There was some kind of personal affinity between this prophet of God and the unbelieving king, so much so that when the king saw that Daniel was facing death, he tried his best to save him.

In verse 16b we read that the king said to Daniel, **"May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"** That is quite a statement. How did he know about this God Daniel constantly served? He and Daniel obviously had a friendship. They had the kind of communication that allowed Darius—without threat of feeling preached at—to see what was real in Daniel's life. So when Daniel found himself facing a crisis, his friend—a pagan king—said in effect, "Daniel, your God will see you through this."

Verse 18 says that **"the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep."**

Every one of us knows that experience. When you can't sleep because you are so deeply worried or troubled. Or when you are so close to someone that you can't sleep because of what they are suffering through.

Daniel was a close friend of the most influential and powerful man in the nation—the king himself! If anybody had power, Darius did. But now even the king couldn't help Daniel. At the end of verse 14 we are told that the king was **"greatly distressed and**

**he determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.”** But he couldn't do a thing to save Daniel.

Now you don't have to be in a literal lions' den or have a friend tossed in one to be confronted with the reality of your own limitations apart from God's help.

I know that some of you here today feel like you are facing some personal impossibilities. And you are on the verge of giving up. Some of you are under-employed. For some of you it's an on-going financial problem. For others it's relational. You've almost given up on your marriage making it. In spite of all you have done, things just are not improving. They seem to be getting worse. For some parents here today you are deeply concerned today about your children. For some it's a health problem or a recurring sin or addiction that you wonder if you will ever be able to conquer. No matter what you do, there just seems to be no way out. No hope for change.

Whatever lions' den you may find yourself in, now or in the future, sooner or later you must come face to face with your human limitations. Why? What good is that? To face all our human limitations seems counterproductive and defeating!

The truth is that it is the most spiritually productive place you could ever be! You see, God brings you into the lions' den because he loves you. He does so because he knows that it is only when you come to the end of yourself that you will ever be able to taste the joys of truly knowing his presence and power in your life. It is only in dying to yourself that you can come alive to God.

So, the first truth you need to know is that God's tests are often designed to confront you with the reality of your own human limitations.

## **II. God's Tests Are Designed to Lead You into Deeper Levels of Dependence on Him to Deliver You**

And second, God's tests are designed to lead you into deeper levels of dependence on him to deliver you.

**In verses 19-22 we are told that “at the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, ‘Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?’ Daniel answered, ‘O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king.’”**

Note that Daniel was talking to the king while he was still within the den of lions. The lions were still all around him.

If you had been there and the king had come with a rope ladder under his arm and called out your name, don’t you think you would probably have crawled out first and then talked about the experience? But the king and Daniel talked back and forth as if they were meeting on a street corner somewhere. Daniel had no fear. For he had seen the angel of the Lord come and shut the lions’ mouths.

We don’t know what exactly happened in the den. All we are told is that the lions’ mouths were shut. That must mean they had been open! But now they were as tame as kittens. You can almost see Daniel leaning up against the wall of the den with these massive lions lying all around him keeping him warm through the night.

D. L. Moody said he envisioned Daniel actually using one of the lions as a pillow that night. But whatever happened, Daniel experienced, first hand, the all-powerful hand of God.

The story is told of a persecuted Christian who was being chased by some soldiers under orders to put him to death. He saw a cave and rushed in to hide there. The soldiers arrived some time later. As they started to go in they noticed a spider’s web across the cave. They reasoned that no one had gone into that cave because the spider’s web was there. Later on, the Christian came out and walked through the spider’s web. He realized why the soldiers had



not come in and said, “With God a web is as a wall. But without God a wall is as a spider’s web.”

The Lord takes great pleasure in taking the most difficult situations in life—those that seem humanly impossible to us—and using those impossibilities as a way of increasing our faith in his unlimited capability.

In verse 23 we read that **“the king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.”** This last clause is the most important clause in this entire narrative. It reads, **“He had trusted in his God.”**

Throughout the Scriptures we learn that temptations and trials of life are to be responded to, not by running from them, or trying to avoid them, or trying to meet them in the power of our own abilities, but by drawing near to God in faith.

Hebrews 11:33 tells us about those “who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions. . . .”

First Peter 5:8-9 says, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith. . . .”

First John 5:4 says, “For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”

Triumph over trial or temptation in your life is by faith in God. That’s how Daniel triumphed and stood strong, and how you are to do so as well. Daniel had the confident assurance that God would deliver him, one way or another.

But most of us don’t trust God like Daniel did. We are often terrified by what we find ourselves in. Our faith in God is so weak. So how then do we have Daniel’s faith? How do we face a pack of ravenous lions and still trust in God?

It’s been said that God’s prescription for the increase of faith is, “Know me better and you will trust me more.”

That is how Daniel had faith for this moment. He had spent almost 90 years of his life knowing God. We saw earlier how Daniel set aside regular times daily to spend with God in prayer. Daniel cultivated his relationship with God so that when the ultimate test of his life came, his faith in God was there!

It's too late in the moment of crisis to cultivate that relationship. It's too late then to try to muster up faith in God. The kind of faith needed for a crisis must be cultivated and developed over time as you are under the teaching of God's Word, spending time with God in prayer, and reading his Word.

Spurgeon once said, "Be great believers! Little faith will bring your soul to heaven. But great faith will bring heaven down into your soul."

Having great faith is not some mystical, magical thing. It comes by simply cultivating a vital, authentic relationship with Jesus in your daily Christian life. That is how the lions are stopped.

## Conclusion

Daniel didn't know what he would experience in the lions' den but he knew that God would be with him and he put his trust in God.

A grandfather was out walking with his grandson one day. "How far do you think we are from home?" he asked the grandson.

The boy said, "Grandpa, I don't know."

The grandfather asked, "Well, where are you?"

Again the boy said, "I don't know."

Then the grandfather chuckled and said, "Sounds to me as if you are lost."

The young boy looked up at his grandfather and said, "I can't be lost, I'm with you."

Ultimately that is the answer to all that worries or threatens us too. We are never lost; we are always safe—safe in the truest sense of the word when we are with God. That, brothers and sisters, is the message of Daniel 6.

The life of Daniel is really a model and an example of how God's people can live in difficult conditions and come through victoriously. Even as the Jewish people were living in Babylonian captivity, so Christians today are pilgrims and sojourners in a foreign culture. We, like Daniel, must exercise our faith in God's purposes and leading for our lives. We too must resolve in advance that we will not be defiled by the world. And whether our God delivers us or not from the lions' den, we will remain faithful to him.

Philip P. Bliss wrote many songs and hymns, one of which is titled "Dare to be a Daniel." This is another of the fine Sunday school songs by Philip P. Bliss, one of the truly important contributors to both early gospel hymnody and the rise of the Sunday school movement. Bliss, like many other Christian leaders, realized the unusual potential of teaching our youth spiritual truths through appropriate songs. Here is the refrain from "Dare to Be a Daniel":

*Dare to be a Daniel;  
dare to stand alone!  
Dare to have a purpose firm!  
Dare to make it known.*

May God help each one of us to dare to be a Daniel. Amen.



# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons)
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## Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

*Answers for Life!*

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: [Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org](mailto:Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

Web site: [www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org](http://www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

**PRAYER:**

Single out that trial or those few trials now that just don't seem to be working out for you. Say to God, "Lord I want you to use this in my life to do your perfect will. . . ."

It may be that you have never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ so you know nothing of deliverance from tests like this. The only way you have handled your battles is with your fists or your wits. And you've made a mess of it all.

You want to know God's presence and power. But you don't know how. The first step is to recognize your need for help, for divine help. That begins by saying in your heart right now, "Lord Jesus I need your deliverance. . . ."

Father, give to all of us that quiet confidence that you are at work in our lives—even when we are surrounded by our own den of lions. Teach us to focus on our Savior who trusted you and submitted himself to you when he faced the cross.

Our Father, we thank you for the faithfulness of Daniel and for the inspiration his life has been down through the ages reaching to us today. We ask, Lord, that some of the stability of character and some of the spirituality may become ours as we reflect on the relationship he had with you. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

A little girl was once asked in Sunday school why she thought Daniel was not afraid of the Lions. She said it was because the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" was there! That is one way the Bible describes Jesus Christ. That lion is more powerful than all the lions you will ever face. May God give to us the courage of a Daniel as we draw near to him in faith, and as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.