

God Saves Daniel

Daniel 6:19-28

¹⁹ Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! ²² My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.”

²³ Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

²⁴ And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote:

To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:

Peace be multiplied to you.

²⁶ I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.

For He is the living God,

And steadfast forever;

His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed,

And His dominion shall endure to the end.

*27 He delivers and rescues,
And He works signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth,
Who has delivered Daniel from the ^[i]power of the lions.*

28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Last week we saw Daniel being set up, not for the first time, by those in the Kingdom who were opposed to him because of his integrity and his faithfulness. They had done everything in their power to bring him down, including looking for flaws in his work performance and even in his personal life. I say even in his personal life, like that would be shocking, but remember the notion that your personal life is separate from your business life is a rather modern construct. We hear it often today regarding the lives of public officials or public servants that there ‘personal life’ is strictly off limits, and while I can see to a degree how that is true, but we must remember a man or a woman who is characterized by integrity in one area will be full of integrity everywhere.

The Machiavellian idea that you can separate personal ethics from business or political ethics sure did not get its origin in the Scripture. Integrity is something that permeates the whole man. And Daniel was a man of great integrity.

Integrity is not a weakness, but one thing about integrity is that it is predictable. The enemies of Daniel had rightly guessed that the only way they would be able to get at Daniel was in regard to his faithfulness to God. So they, the enemies of Daniel, began their conspiracy against Daniel in an area they knew that he would not compromise in. And what they considered a weakness ended up being their undoing. Listen again to verse 5:

Then these men said, “We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God.”

So, they approached Darius, and they appealed to his vanity. “Oh king, who lives forever... “ and they tricked him into signing the decree that anyone who petitioned anyone except for Darius over the next thirty days would be cast into the Den of Lions. And remember this decree

was according to the law of the Medes and the Persians and thus it could not be altered. Of course we know what Daniel would do, and he does not disappoint, he prays before God, as was his custom, and he does it in full view of all those who would come against him, but then Darius begins to understand the trap that was laid for him and as it says in the text he was greatly displeased in himself.

As we see in the text Darius attempts to find a way for Daniel to be delivered but he the King, was constrained by the Law of the Medes and the Persians, and so he must do as his decree stated and throw Daniel into the Den of Lions. Now what is interesting here, is that we see not one den but more likely three dens or chambers in this passage. Hear me out here. The first den is the men who are conspiring to entrap Daniel. They in secret laid out a plot to destroy Daniel. We do not know where it was that they gathered for the secret meetings, but it is interesting that in verse 7 of this chapter they approach the king with these words: *⁷All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.*

We know from the context this is a lie, because if all the governors were involved, Daniel would have been involved. This entire charade is an attempt to entrap Daniel, but notice there is an appeal to the idea that all of your wise men are involved. Why Darius was tricked, I don't know, but I can tell you this much, just because everyone is doing a thing does not make it right. These men were lions attempting to devour Daniel. And though their plans were in secret their motivations were clear. This notion that everyone is doing something is commonly used and part of the reason it is done, is because it works very often. But what I want us to see is that this plan was laid in secret, and then revealed very publicly. All of the participants knew it was laid in secret and they understood the reason for it, but when they approached the king to tell him why, they kept their nefarious intentions under wraps.

Anyone who would have cried out against such a ploy would be accused of not honoring the king, or of any number of things. In truth, their intention was evil. Things that are plotted in secret are almost never for our good.

Now the second den in this account, is referred to in this passage as a chamber, and it was the location where Daniel lifted his prayers before God. Something else that should be mentioned here is that the text details too us that Daniel prayed with his window's open toward Jerusalem. I want us to notice that this is not the same thing as when a Muslim prays toward his holy city three times a day. As James Jordan puts it, "Daniel's prayers are directed toward God Most High, Possessor of Heaven and Earth. His window were open, as always, toward Jerusalem. This was not because he conceived of Jerusalem as God's place of residence, because Ezekiel had clearly shown that God had moved out of Jerusalem and had come to be with the exiles in Ezekiel 8-11. Rather, the windows were open to Jerusalem because Daniel was praying for the city and the rebuilding of the Temple, which would shortly begin because the 70 years were over.

Daniel Chapters 1-6 is a narrative account of what happens during Daniel's lifetime, the last chapters in this book are primarily wrapped up with prophetic events. We are near the end of Daniel's life at this time, but beginning in Chapter 7 we are going to go back to different periods in his life and look at his prophecies regarding the nations, Jerusalem and of course the coming Messiah.

We are meant to see a contrasting parallel between the den of lions and the chamber of prayer where Daniel prays before his God. Chapter 6:22 Daniel tells Darius that ²² "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they have not hurt me..." Again quoting Jordan, "God's angel is with Daniel in the lion's den. Both chambers are enclosed rooms. Daniel's chamber is an upper chamber, while the lion's den is below ground. The lesson for Darius is either he will join Daniel in the upper room or he will be subject to the mouths of the mighty-men-lions in the pit."

Now here is where things get interesting. Not that they were not already. But at this point in the narrative, we have reached the time of choosing. Darius knows he has been played and tricked by his Satraps and Governors, Darius also knows who Daniel is, and now Darius who is the king can continue on as he always has, or he can learn to trust in Daniels God. Notice at the end of verse 23: *Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.* The reason Daniel was not harmed is given to us in the text. It was

because he trusted in God. It has been said often in this journey through the Book of Daniel, that we must trust in God over everyone and everything else. I know that sounds simple. I could ask a 4 year old in the church if we should trust in God, or trust in... fill in the blank, and they would know how to answer that, but where the problems come, is in the question, What does it look like to trust God, versus, what does it look like to trust in something or someone else?

One of the first things I think we should notice about Daniel in this passage is that when the decree was passed by Nebuchadnezzar the Lions did not even come into Daniel's thinking. The idea that he would be thrown into the Lions if he prayed to God was not even in the slightest bit a deterrent. The reason for this is Daniel had already established a pattern of where he placed his trust. Daniel knew that God was working all things for His purposes. When we have a high view of God's providence it does not mean that things are easy, but we know that God is in control, and we can rest safe in that knowledge, even when it is not always the easiest for us. Daniel's focus was on God it was not on the Lions. Our focus likewise must be on doing what God has called us to do not on the temporal consequences of those actions. Of course saying that, it is important that we are a people who know God's word and God's instructions to us.

Daniel trusted God and God saved him. I have learned that If we place our trust in God, He will always rescue us. But here is the part that is hard for us. We often think of salvation as something that will benefit us, and this is true, but sometimes our greatest rewards lie at the end of or through a trial. God will deliver his people, but sometimes, I might add here quite often He does it in a way that we are not expecting. Sometime He takes us where we do not necessarily want to go. But if our trust is in Him we are never truly in jeopardy. An example of that would be, I am trusting God that I will be saved by not being thrown into the Lions den, but God's plan is..."No, that is not the way I am going to do it. I will save you, but you will spend the night in the lion's den." This is Interesting, because sadly most of think the story is over, when we get tossed in the lions' den. But it when we are weak that God is strong. Sometimes people pray for God to deliver them from pain or emotional anguish and what they do not realize is that God may be using those very things to draw us nearer to him so that even your pain and your loss pales in comparison to the joy of being close to Christ.

I have said this before, and it is not my own statement it is God's "We are bought with a price, and our bodies are not our own." Our first duty and our first responsibility is always to God. Our purpose in everything is to bring glory to God. That is the way Daniel lived his entire life and he wasn't going to change because of lions be they in the form of men or beast. His focus was on what he could do, how he could be faithful to God through prayer and action, even when his action was simply remaining faithful and he let God deal with the things only He could deal with, in this case the lions.

Now Darius in this instance follows very much after the pattern of Nebuchadnezzar earlier. Notice the new decree he makes. And this decree would also be according to the Law of the Medes and the Persians:

To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:

Peace be multiplied to you.

²⁶ I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.

For He is the living God,

And steadfast forever;

His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed,

And His dominion shall endure to the end.

This theme of the Kingdom of God flows throughout the Book of Daniel, and there are kings who recognize it. Daniel and Darius and there are kings who do not. This lays a framework for understanding the prophecy section that is coming after this. We have a command to fear God and not men, and part of this is a recognition that he is in absolute control over everything that is going on.

Now there is another part of this text that needs attention paid to. That is specifically verses 24:

²⁴ And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives; and the lions

overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

What seems like happened from the reading of the text is that when Darius understood that he had been tricked by those plotting against Daniel that he would have the injustice that they had plotted against him be turned against them. Remember the decree that whoever prayed to anyone, but Darius would be cast into the Den of Lions had been actually fulfilled, but God had stopped the mouth of the Lions. Daniel had trusted in God and he had been spared by God. According to commentator Albert Barnes, “The king had arbitrary power. He was convinced of their guilt. His wrath had been with difficulty restrained when he understood the nature of the plot against Daniel. Nothing, therefore, was more natural than that he should subject the guilty to the same punishment which they had sought to bring upon the innocent; nothing more natural than that a proud despot, who saw that, by the force of a law which he could not control, he had been made a tool in subjecting the highest officer of the realm, and the best man in it, to peril of death, should, without any delay, wreak his vengeance on those who had thus made use of him to gratify their own malignant passions.”

There are many who think the tossing in of the wives and children of these men was particularly cruel, but this was in accordance with the laws among the Persians. Curtius says of the Macedonians: *“It is enacted by law that the kindred of those who conspire against the king shall be put to death with them.”*

We know that in God’s law in Deuteronomy 24:16 *“Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.”* But something else we have to remember is that this was not a King who had given heed to the law of God. This was the act of a pagan monarch and we do not have to vindicate these actions, and yet many try to do so. But we learn another important lesson from this verse.

This sort of thing, the actions of one affecting another happens all of the time in the course of God’s providence. Nothing is more common than that the wife and children of a guilty man also suffering on account of the sin of the husband and father. We can all think of instances of families struggling because of the sinful actions of one of their members. We look at the cruelty

of such an event and yet even in our justice system when a man is condemned for crime, those consequences are felt by all who are his. There is also the loss of one who might have provided for their wants and needs, and the one who should have been their protector and counselor is now anchor around their necks. The idea that the wife and children do not suffer for the crimes of the father to us seems fair, but the spouse and children always suffer; and, though this took another form in ancient times, and when adopted as a principle of punishment is not in accordance with our sense of justice in administering laws, yet it is a principle which pervades the world - for the effects of crime cannot and do not terminate on the guilty individual himself.

In Colossians 1:9-14 the Apostle Paul mentions that he is praying for the Saints and I want you to notice what he prays for them:

⁹ For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and ¹⁴ conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption ¹⁴through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

He prays that they would be filled with Knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

I think it is interesting that there are some today who do not see parallels between the world of Daniel and today. Daniel was born into a nation that had a special covenant relationship with God. The people and their leaders had in large part forgotten the God who they had this special relationship with, but this understanding undergird everything that they did. Through no fault of Daniels, he was carried off into captivity by a people that did not fear God. These people, and there were many of them, attempted to cause him to live life according to their way of doing things. I can hear them, "That is not the way we do things Daniel." Daniel, however, time and time again remained faithful to God. They threatened him, they tried to coerce him with benefits and power, but Daniel remained faithful to God.

He had people threaten him to his face, he had people conspire behind his back and yet he

remained faithful. This is why Paul prays that we would have *knowledge wisdom and spiritual understanding*.

But notice the knowledge wisdom and spiritual understanding is not enough by itself. The reason for these things is so that we can walk... “*walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*” This prayer sounds great when we read it in isolation. But walking worthy of our calling is almost never easy. I have said it before and I know you have heard it before, it is easy to walk the walk when things are good, but it is during the trial where the man of integrity and faithfulness is revealed.

¹¹ strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

I know the Bible tells us in Nehemiah 8 that the Joy of the Lord is our strength. But notice the way this joy comes. We are strengthened with might according to his glorious power and this is what fills us with patience and longsuffering with joy. If I am being showered with gold coins every few seconds and you came up to me and told me to be patient it would seem a strange statement, but the reason we are called to be patient is because there are times when we will have to spend the night in the lions den. The joy of the Lord that is our strength actually comes from learning to trust in God when times are tough. There is a difference between the Joy of the Lord and the Joy of the World. And one provides a strength that builds Godly character and will last. The other joy is fleeting and will fade.

¹² giving thanks to the Father

And lastly he tells us to give thanks to the Father...and he lists the benefits that we have been given.

who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

*¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness
and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,*

*¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood,
the forgiveness of sins.*

Our God is working all things together for His purposes and for our good. We must learn to trust in His word, and we must learn to walk where He is leading us.