

THE POWERFUL IMPACT OF FAITH IN GOD (Daniel 6)

(Context of Daniel 6)

Daniel 6:18–23-----¹⁸ **Now the king went** to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. 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.

Most of you are aware of **the persecution that many believers endure in China** for their faith in and love for Christ. Near the beginning of 2005, Chinese officials from the Public Security Bureau burst into a Sunday school room at a local church. Inside, they found **30 children and herded them into a van.** Despite the scary situation, one child began to sing. In a few moments, the van was filled with song.

Upon arrival at the police station, the children marched bravely into the interrogation room, continuing to sing. The Chinese officers told the children that each of them would have to write, **"I do not believe in Jesus"** one hundred times or they would not be released to their parents. The children began to write immediately. However, instead of writing, “I do not believe in Jesus, they all wrote: **"I believe in Jesus today. I will believe in Jesus tomorrow. I will believe in Jesus forever!"**

Exasperated, the officials called the children's parents who were told their children would not be released unless they denied Christ. Some *did* deny Christ. However, one believer who was a widow who had twin sons absolutely refused to deny Him. The officers threatened her once again saying they would not release her sons.

The widow replied, **"Well, I guess you will** just have to keep them, because without Jesus, there would be no way for me to take care of them!"

With no avenues left open to them, the officials said, "Take your sons and go!"

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This story reminds all of us of how quickly that our faith as Christians can be put to the test. It reminds us of so many situations in which, one moment, ordinary Christians are going about their typical daily schedule, and the next moment, they suddenly—out of the blue—find themselves in an awful situation—sometimes a “life or death” situation.

Daniel chapter 6 is one of these stories. Daniel is not a 15-year-old living in Jerusalem anymore. The year is 539 BC. He is now in his early 80s and has been 500 miles away from his home for almost 70 years. He has lived his life faithfully for God in the midst of a pagan society for nearly seven decades. Surely everything will be smooth sailing in his final years on earth, right? No. Because of the hatred and jealousy of his fellow government workers, Daniel, who is totally innocent of any wrong-doing, is facing sure death—a horrible death—being thrown into a den of lions.

How did Daniel react to this awful situation he found himself in? And what can we learn from this story that prepares us for those sudden and sometimes scary situations that can come upon us out of the blue?

That’s what I would like to speak to you about for a few minutes this morning.

Title: The Powerful Impact of Faith in God

(Prayer)

If someone asked you for **a definition of the word “faith,”** how would you answer that?

Well in our text today in Daniel 6, we don’t get a **definition** of faith, but we do get an amazing **example** of faith. I would like to just remind all of us of the story of Daniel and the lion’s den and then talk to you about the powerful impact living by faith in God can have in your life and the lives of those around you.

- Babylon conquered by Medes and the Persians (October 12, 539 BC)
- King Darius puts Daniel and two other men over his entire kingdom
- Daniel’s work is so top notch that Darius thinks about putting him in charge of everything:

Daniel 6:3 (NLT)-----³ Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel’s great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire.

- Jealousy! Can't find any corruption ... so they use his godliness to ruin him.
- Government leaders trick king into a law resulting in Daniel's death.
- Realizing that he would prob. end up dead, Daniel does what he has done since he was 15---prays 3X a day.
- Government officials tell the king that Daniel has broken his law and he must be thrown to the lions.
- Darius knows he has been duped and he does all he can to stop execution, but he can't. He gives the order but says to Daniel:

Daniel 6:16----- "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you."

- The next morning he hurries to check on Daniel. Daniel tells him that God sent His angel to rescue him. Daniel is removed from the lion's den and does not have a scratch on him. (I have to read v. 23):

Daniel 6:23-----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.**

Hebrews 11:33 says:

"By faith" Daniel **"stopped"** the mouths of lions."

- Darius then commands Daniel's accusers to be thrown into the lion's den (and their bodies never touch the floor!)
- The chapter ends with Darius writing a letter to the entire world that Daniel's miracle-working God is to be feared!

In what ways did Daniel's faith in God make such a difference?

- **It impacted the excellence of his leadership/work and the rewards he received**
- **It enabled him to endure persecution and hatred** (even to the point of attempted murder)
- **It enabled him to stand for God** (praying 3X/day) **even though he knew he would probably die by doing so.**

How could he do this? Because he believed what God said. He believed like Job who said:

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I

shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! (Job 19:25-27)

So even if Daniel died, he knew he would be resurrected and see God with his own eyes! (He even writes about resurrection from the dead in Daniel 12!)

- **It impacted the life of the most powerful man on earth** (who tries to stop his sure death).

NOTE: the fact that the king believed in the possibility that Daniel could be delivered means that Daniel had to have told Darius about God's amazing miracles in Israel's history (Red Sea... Fiery Furnace, etc.).

ALSO, Darius said in v. 20: "the God whom you serve continually..." (Daniel HAD to have set an amazing example for him to say this about him).

- **It delivered him supernaturally from both injury and death** (because he was loyal to Darius and had done no wrong against him)

"Through faith," the book of Hebrews says, Daniel "stopped the mouths of lions." (11:33) "Lord, you control EVERYTHING in the universe. I KNOW you can protect me from these lions. But if not, I will be with You!"

- **It results in the entire world hearing about the true God as well as God's ongoing blessing in his life.**

In his book *The Pressure's Off*, psychologist Larry Crabb uses a story from his childhood to illustrate our need to trust in God when troubles come.

One Saturday afternoon, I decided I was a big boy and could use the bathroom without anyone's help. So I climbed the stairs, closed and locked the door behind me, and for the next few minutes felt very self-sufficient.

Then it was time to leave. I couldn't unlock the door. I tried with every ounce of my three-year-old strength, but I couldn't do it. I panicked. I felt again like a very little boy as the thought went through my head, "I might spend the rest of my life in this bathroom."

My parents—and likely the neighbors—heard my desperate scream.

"Are you okay?" Mother shouted through the door she couldn't open from the outside. "Did you fall? Have you hit your head?"

"I can't unlock the door!" I yelled. "Get me out of here!"

I wasn't aware of it right then, but Dad raced down the stairs, ran to the garage to find the ladder, hauled it off the hooks, and leaned it against the side of the house just beneath the bedroom window. With adult strength, he pried it open, then climbed into my prison, walked past me, and with that same strength, turned the lock and opened the door.

"Thanks, Dad," I said—and ran out to play.

That's how I thought the Christian life was supposed to work. When I get stuck in a tight place, I should do all I can to free myself. When I can't, I should pray. Then God shows up. He hears my cry—"Get me out of here! I want to play!"—and unlocks the door to the blessings I desire.

Sometimes he does. But now, no longer three years old and approaching sixty, I'm realizing the Christian life doesn't work that way. And I wonder, are any of us content with God? Do we even like him when he doesn't open the door we most want opened—when a marriage doesn't heal, when rebellious kids still rebel, when friends betray, when financial reverses threaten our comfortable way of life, when the prospect of terrorism looms, when health worsens despite much prayer, when loneliness intensifies and depression deepens, when ministries die?

God has climbed through the small window into my dark room. But he doesn't walk by me to turn the lock that I couldn't budge. Instead, he sits down on the bathroom floor and says, "Come sit with me!" He seems to think that climbing into the room to be with me matters more than letting me out to play.

I don't always see it that way. "Get me out of here!" I scream. "If you love me, *unlock the door!*"

Dr. Crabb adds these words: "...the choice is ours. Either we can keep asking him to give us what we think will make us happy—to escape our dark room and run to the playground of blessings—or we can accept his invitation to sit with him, for now, perhaps, in darkness, and to seize the opportunity to know him better and represent him well in this difficult world."

Invitation