

Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23

Reformation; November 5-6, 2023

The long, dark hours of night have a way of getting to us and bringing our fears into focus. The Bible is full of all kinds of examples. The Pharaoh of Egypt once watched death steal away his son and his kingdom. The darkness forced Job to feel the depth of his loss. Even Jesus himself suffered during the long night before his death. Have you ever felt those fears at night as you lay awake? Do worries race through your mind? Are you afraid of tomorrow? Do you fear the challenges that your family may be experiencing? Do you have fears at work? The darkness always seems to make things worse, doesn't it?

I wonder what was going through his mind. He could hear the growls getting closer. But he couldn't see clearly in the dark. He can smell the rotten meat on the breath of the beast. And it was close. The animal could weigh up to 550 lbs. It could run at 50 mph for short bursts. One swipe of his paw could generate a strike force of up to almost 23,000 lb./ft. Just to put it into perspective, a professional boxer's knock-out punch can register at only 925 lb./ft. He could open his mouth nearly a foot wide, allowing their long teeth and powerful jaws to puncture skulls. They were hungry, very hungry. There were more than one of them prowling around him in the dark of the night in the den that he stood in.

There the 80-year-old man, Daniel, stood awaiting to see what would happen that night. When would the animals attack him? Perhaps, he anticipated the sharp fangs cutting into his neck. Perhaps, he wondered how long it would last. Would it hurt for hours or being over quickly? Would he even live through the night? I wonder if Daniel had any second thought as he sat in that dark den full of hungry lions overnight. After all, there were only really three outcomes: ¹ He would be beaten and would go to be with his Savior. ² He would be badly hurt, but he would live on to serve God another day. ³ He would be rescued as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace.

So, how did Daniel get there? As a young man, he had been taken captive by the Babylonians. Even though a captive's life was rough, it was not unbearable. They would be allowed a certain amount of freedom. Some were even allowed to serve in the government. As Daniel entered the king's service, it was clear that God had blessed Daniel physically and intellectually. For nearly 6 decades, Daniel served in three different governments. All three of these government recognized the talent of Daniel.

Within each of those governments, Daniel rose up quickly in the ranks. Today, we see Jesus serving the Persian government. Persia almost miraculously conquered the powerful capital of Babylon in one night. It would almost be expected that a foreign king would get rid of the previous administration and bring in his own. Yet, the new king, Darius, kept Daniel. In fact, he was so impressed with Daniel that he would have Daniel be one of three rulers over his new kingdom. This is where we find Daniel in our text this morning.

This didn't sit well with the other administrators and leaders. Even though Daniel had served in these three governments for nearly 60 years, he was still a foreigner. As a foreigner, a captive Israelite, there was certainly some jealousy from the Medes and the Persians leaders under him. They wanted his position of power. They wanted him removed from his position. So, they began to look for ways to make that happen.

So, where do they start? They did what politicians do, they tried to dig up some dirt from the past. In the verses before our text, it is written: **"At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally, these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."** (Daniel 6:4-5)

So, they began to watch Daniel. They came up with a way to get rid of Daniel forever. Even though Daniel had lived in a foreign land who worshiped false gods, he never forgot his God. Three times a day, he would go home, open his upstairs windows, and pray to God very humbly facing Jerusalem. The public could see him, but he was simply reflecting his faith in God. When they saw Daniel doing this day after day after day, they came up with a plan. **"The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be**

thrown into the lions' den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” So, King Darius put the decree in writing.” (Daniel 6:7-9)

The trap was set for Daniel. All he had to do was to say “*no*.” Nobody would have known the difference. No one could’ve looked into his heart. After all, everyone would have realized that he was just saying the word “*no*” to save himself. What would’ve been the harm? Certainly, God would have understood why he would have to lie this time. There was still work to be done. After all, it would’ve been only 30 days. They were just words. Inside of his heart, he still believed God. All he had to do was to say “*no, I’m not going to pray out in the open for a month.*”

Yet, Daniel was willing to risk it all. He was ready to die on account of his faith. He was not going to change a thing. Why would an 80-year-old man be willing to have his limbs ripped off by hungry lions? Why was he willing to die a horrible death in a lion’s den? He knew the risk. He knew what could happen. Yet, he did it anyway. If Daniel had not done it, he would be saying that “*I fear King Darius more than I fear the King of the Universe.*” Even though the king didn’t want to throw Daniel into that den, he had no choice. **“So, the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”**

Now comes the tough question. *How about us? Would we do what Daniel did? Would we do what a named Martin Luther did as he stood before the leaders in Germany a little over 500 years ago? Would you open the windows and pray? It’s not an easy question to answer, is it? Maybe the question is, how does one do that? The Christian stands steadfast in the faith. That’s what Daniel did. He stood steadfast in the promises of God.*

The results? **“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, “May the 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, Your Majesty.”** It is not always easy to stand in the darkness of a world of sin. May God help us, as he did Daniel, to stand in the light of His Son. Amen.