

(Daniel) in the Lion's Den

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon on Daniel in the lion's den emphasizes the importance of integrity and faithfulness to God in the face of adversity.

Duration: 45:41

Scripture: Daniel 6:1-4, Daniel 6:16, Daniel 6:19-20, Daniel 6:22, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Daniel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den from Daniel chapter six. The story involves the jealousy of political subordinates, the vanity of a king, the integrity of Daniel, and the power and preservation of God. Daniel is described as having an excellent spirit and being faithful, which sets him apart from the other governors and satraps. Despite their attempts to find fault with him, they are unable to do so. The speaker emphasizes the importance of living a habitual pattern of walking with God, as it determines our ability to stand in remarkable occasions. The sermon also highlights the opposition and criticism that can come when one has a good attitude and remains above complaining and negativity. The age of Daniel, believed to be in his 80s at the time, is mentioned as an example of being a productive servant of God even in old age.

Transcript

Tonight we're in Daniel chapter 6, which has long been a beloved Bible story, and no wonder about it. There's so many incredibly dramatic features to this story. You have the jealousy of political subordinates, you have the vanity of a king, the integrity of a man, you have the power in the preservation of God, and to throw into the mix, you have some wild animals and violence as well.

So it's just a great story. Daniel chapter 6, of course, we're talking about Daniel in the lion's den. Verse 1. It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps to be over the whole kingdom.

And over these three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account of them so that the king would suffer no loss. Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. We're dealing now with a fellow named Darius.

This is no longer the Babylonian empire. If we remember, the book of Daniel began when the Babylonians conquered over the southern kingdom of Judah, and they took the breast and the brightest of that kingdom

and took them away in exile to train them. An MBA program, so to speak, a Babylonian university to train outstanding young men for civil service in Babylon.

Daniel, his companions, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, as well as many others, were part of this group of shining stars among the young men of Judah who were carried away into captivity. Well, that lasted many years. But eventually, some 40 years or so later, the Babylonian empire was overthrown by an amalgamation of the Medes and the Persians.

Modern day Iran and the great Persian empire of that day, they conquered over the Babylonian empire. Well, Darius was the man ruling over the region of Babylon in the days of this Medo-Persian kingdom. There's a slight problem here with this is that secular history of this period has no record of a ruler named Darius, which is interesting because before we've been reading about Nebuchadnezzar and secular history is filled with mentions of Nebuchadnezzar.

We saw last week about a king named Belshazzar and secular history is filled with specific mentions by name of that king. But there's no mention of Darius. Now, we know that the real emperor of this Medo-Persian empire was a king named Cyrus.

He was the one who overthrew the Babylonian empire. And so some people believe that Darius is simply another name for Cyrus, who ruled the Medo-Persian empire during this period. And that may be, you know, sometimes it's not unknown in biblical times where the Bible will give an individual one particular name, but secular history will call him by another name.

It may be that Darius was another name for a fellow named Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. You see, even though Babylon was a very important city in this Medo-Persian empire, it was not the capital. It was the capital of the Babylonian empire, but it was not the capital of the Medo-Persian empire.

And so it would make sense that the king, the emperor Cyrus would stay in the capital city of the Medo-Persian empire, but he would appoint his son as a prominent ruler over the city of Babylon. I think though, that the best theory that we can figure out from secular history is we know that there's an ancient official, and I hope I don't butcher his name here. Of course, he's not around to correct me on it.

Gubaru was his name in the ancient documents. And we know from secular history that there was an ancient official ruling over the city of Babylon at this time known as Gubaru. Cyrus appointed him as ruler over Babylon immediately after its capture, before his son Cambyses came and ruled over the city.

It may be very well that Darius is a honorific title. The name means holder of the scepter. It may not have anything to do with being a name.

It may be a title. And so ancient documents show us that this man named Gubaru had the power to make appointments, to assemble an army, to levy taxes, and to possess palaces. This fellow Gubaru, whom I personally believe was Darius, was in a very real sense, the king over Babylon.

He wasn't the king over the entire Medo-Persian empire, but of this particular segment of this particular province and important city, he was the king. Now, under his rule, we find here again, Daniel chapter six, verse two, over these three governors of whom Daniel was one that the satraps might give account to them so that the king would suffer no loss. Now, do you understand the situation here? This ruler sets up three sub administrators under him.

They're to oversee. We don't know if their responsibilities were divided up by geography, by area of expertise, but this was his cabinet. These were his senior advisors and administrators right under him.

Now, of these three, look at it here in verse three. Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps being because an excellent spirit was in him and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. Now, again, Daniel being one of the three leaders directly under Darius shined above the other two fellows because he had an excellent spirit and Daniel had a good attitude in his work.

And this made him, as we're going to find out in the succeeding verses, the object of attack. Isn't it interesting where if you have a good attitude about things, people will oppose you. You know, when the complaining is going around and the griping and the sniping, if you don't join in with it, if you have an attitude and a heart and spirit that just sort of is above all of that, you'll really face some criticism for it.

But Daniel was such a man that had this this wonderfully noble attitude. Now, one more thing before we jump into verse four. Do you know how old Daniel was at this time? Probably in his 80s.

Yet he's still a productive servant of God. Verse four. So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find no charge or fault because he was faithful, nor was there any error or fault found in him.

I have to read that again. So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find no charge or fault because he was faithful, nor was there any error or fault found in him. Now, we know this doesn't imply for us at all that Daniel was sinlessly perfect.

No, not one bit. But it's absolutely amazing and an incredible testimony to the integrity of Daniel that there could be men trying to dig up whatever scandal they could find. We find this in our modern day political process, don't we? A political candidate, a nominee for office.

They'll be put under this kind of scrutiny. How would you like to be nominated to the Supreme Court and instantly lobbyists from a political party go and try to dig up everything they can on you that might put a bad light on whoever you are of what you've done. And so you've been a public servant for more than 50 years, 50 years.

Surely there's some skeletons in the closet. Surely there's some dirt swept under the rug. They couldn't find a thing.

Now, as we're going to find out, these were men who would lie to. They were looking for the smallest thing that they could blow up and inflate into something big. They couldn't even find a mole hill to make into a mountain.

Absolutely amazing. The testimony that this is about Daniel's life, especially in his public service, no fraudulent expense accounts, no intern scandals, no questionable business deals, no gifts from lobbyists, no accusations from his staff. If there was something out there, they would have found it.

But as I said before, there were no skeletons in his closet. Now, again, I think it's amazing when we see this and the kind of integrity that Daniel had. We all look at our own lives and fall short of that somewhere or another.

But maybe it's time to challenge ourselves and say, you know, we can live in such a way that's blameless. And you can't do it in your own strength. You need to do it as the Holy Spirit empowers you.

You know, you need a power in your life, in your being, greater than what you can work up in your own willpower. But when you surrender yourself to the power of God, it really can work in you and through you in this great, glorious way. When he considered Daniel's integrity, the great English preacher Charles Spurgeon bemoaned the way we compromise in our modern world.

I just have to quote this one for you. Imagine Spurgeon and all his flurry of speech. He's just on a roll in his sermon.

And he says, as for Mr. Excuse me. Let me start again, because this is good. As for Lord, fair speech, Lord, time server, Mr. Smooth Man, Mr. Anything, Mr. Facing Both Ways, Mr. Two Tongues and all the members of the club, Mr. By ends included, the entire company of them will be swept away when the judge comes into judgment.

Well, you think about that fair speech, time serving, smooth man, Mr. Anything Facing Both Ways. That's not integrity, but Daniel had it. You see, he had it in private and it was reflected in public.

Now, let's notice again, they say going on now to verse five, 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. Now, these men knew Daniel pretty well. They knew that he could not be trapped into evil, but they also knew that he would be faithful to his God in all circumstances.

It's like, how do we set a trap for Daniel? Well, if we put him into a predicament where being faithful to God would get him into trouble, then we'll know he'll get into trouble. What a testimony they said, we know Daniel. We know this plot will work.

And this is something serious for us to consider. They knew Daniel's life. You know, the world world may not understand the intricacies of doctrine or the intimacies of worship with God, but they can tell it when you have a bad temper.

The world can see it when you're selfish, when you're conceited, when you're dishonest, that the world is a very poor critic of my Christianity. But there are very sufficient critic of my conduct. They can see how I live.

People all around me can. They could see how Daniel lived as well. Now, if you notice this, he may go to the king now and they say, well, here's the trap.

Let's let's set it here. Verse six. So these kings and governors and say, excuse me, these governors and say traps thronged before the king and said thus to him, King Darius live forever.

All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators, the say traps, the counselors and advisors have consulted together to establish a royal decree and to make a forum statute that whoever petitions any God or man for 30 days, except you, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O King, establish the decree and sign the writing so that it cannot be changed according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter. Therefore, King Darius signed the written decree.

Did you notice the lie in here? They said there in verse seven, all the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and say traps, the counselors and advisors have consulted together to establish this royal statute. Oh, do you think Daniel was in on those discussions? I think not. But they came and say, well, you know, King, we've all talked about it together.

And they as much as they knew Daniel, they knew Darius as well. They knew that they could appeal to him and flatter him. Oh, King, you know, it wouldn't be a great unifying thing in your kingdom.

Let's get everybody on the same page. And for 30 days, nobody can pray to anybody but you. You see, it's flattery.

Plus, they try to make it reasonable. Look, it's only for 30 days, King. You know, you can handle that.

And so the whole empire would be brought together in this unity. And they make this proposal before the king and the king will agree to it. Now, I want you to notice here that it says in verse eight, it speaks about laws that cannot be changed according to the law of the Medes and the Persians.

It was an established principle in the Middle Persian Empire that when a king formally signed and instituted a decree, it was binding. Now, I found two different opinions among Bible commentators on this. Some believe that it was binding forever.

Other people believe that it was binding for 30 days and could not be altered for a month. And the reason behind this, the thinking behind this was that the decrees of a Persian king were unchangeable because he was thought to speak for the gods and the gods can't be wrong. The gods can't change their minds.

And so if the king is always changing his mind, he's undercutting his own authority. And so they said, well, let's protect against that and put some permanency to the decrees of the king. And so they they make this decree.

Now, what do you think about that? Suppose the law of the land was passed today. Nobody can pray during the remainder of this month. Here we are in the first day of the month.

And for all of this month, you can't pray on to God in heaven. You can only pray to the government. You can only pray to the president.

You can't pray to God in heaven or you're going to be thrown into jail. We didn't turn out at the next prayer meeting would be like. I mean, you think about it, it's it's a few enough now.

I think about what that would happen. Well, how many people would say, well, you know, I got a lot to do this month. Let's postpone the prayer meeting for a month.

We've all got pressing business to do, don't we? Daniel didn't care. We're going to notice how it continues on here. Ten.

Now, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home and in his upper room with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. You see, Daniel was confronted with a test of loyalty. Daniel liked Darius, and it seems that Darius liked Daniel, as we'll find out before we're done with this chapter.

So it wasn't that Daniel had anything personal against Darius. No, not at all. Daniel wanted to render unto Caesar to use language from the New Testament to render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar.

But he would not give to the government things that belong to God alone. And our prayer, our worship, our religious devotion, it belongs to God and God alone. Now, the first thing we think is, Daniel, this is awfully risky, don't you think? No, Daniel knew that the safest thing he could do was radically obey God.

Think about that for a moment. The most prudent thing you can do in your life is be fully committed to God. That's absolutely the safest.

Well, you think you're safe right now, but where are you safer? In your own home, in your own car, in your own life, or safer in the hand of God? Now, it isn't hard to see why most of us fail at this point. It isn't hard to see why people are men-pleasers instead of God-pleasers. It seems like people have the power to hire us or fire us.

It seems like people have the power to break our hearts or to slander us or to make our lives genuinely miserable. But you see, when we really understand that God is in control, then it makes sense to stand for God. It really comes down to that understanding.

Is God really in control or man? The great Scottish preacher named Alexander McLaren said this, unless you are prepared to be in the minority and now and then be called narrow, fanatic, and to be laughed at by men because you will not do what they do, but abstain and resist. In other words, unless you're willing to do that, there's very little chance of you ever making much of your Christian profession. It'll be stuck to you at some time or another.

You can count on it. If you're more concerned with pleasing men than with pleasing God, you'll fail at this critical point where Daniel succeeded. So what did Daniel do? He thought there in verse 10, he went home in his upper room with the windows open toward Jerusalem.

He knelt down on his knees three times that day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. Daniel didn't let the decree change his actions one bit. He didn't do more prayer.

He didn't do less prayer. He simply continued his excellent prayer life. Now, it would have been either compromise or pride to change in either direction.

Daniel wasn't going to rush down to the street corner and say, I thank you, Lord, our God, who livest in the heaviness to make an ostentatious display of his prayer as if he was praying to God, to men instead of to God. No, but neither would Daniel go and lock himself in the basement where nobody could see and tell his servant, leave me uninterrupted for a time. He wouldn't do that either.

Daniel did exactly what he did all the time. If you notice, first of all, his custom and prayers, it describes her in verse 10. He went to his upper room.

In other words, it was a private prayer. It wasn't made with any intention to impress others. Do you find yourself doing that sometime? Well, especially in public prayer, you're praying, but you're really thinking how your prayer sounds in the ears of other people.

Well, sometimes I wish people would think about how their prayer sounds in the ears of other people, especially when they drone on and on and on in prayer. I think I've shared this within the last few weeks,

but I think it's so funny to share it again about the guy who said, you know, the first three minutes you pray, we're praying with you. The next three minutes you pray, we're praying for you.

The third three minutes you pray, we're praying against you. Well, you know, Daniel wasn't going to change those customs at all. He prayed privately.

He knew his prayers was to God and not to man. And you know, when you know that your prayers to God and not to man, you're not concerned with sounding flowery. You're not like, oh, you know, gee, my prayers don't sound so good.

I'm not so eloquent in prayer. If you can cry out, God, please help me. That's all the eloquence and prayer you need.

You don't need to be a man or a woman of great words of a Shakespearean vocabulary, mastering King James English. Oh, Lord God, as we beseech this, the forget it. Every one of you, absolutely every one of you has the ability to be effective and eloquent in both private prayer and public prayer.

Daniel was praying privately here. He prayed in his upper room. Secondly, if you'll notice in verse 10, he prayed with his windows open towards Jerusalem.

Now, why did he do that? Because Jerusalem, even though the city lay in ruins, even though the temple was destroyed, that's where the altar of God stood and that's where sacrifice was made for sins. It was his recognition, Lord God, I need a covering sacrifice. I can't go and offer a bull or a ram because there's no place of sacrifice here in Babylon that's approved of by you, God.

But I will direct my prayer towards your holy city where that altar once stood. And friends, this is translating it into our Christian life. This is the way we pray in full recognition of the cross.

It always come to God, recognizing that we don't have a right to stand before him, but instead that right is made for us by the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. That's the glory of it, that Jesus does this work for us and our standing is in Jesus. It is not in ourself.

I want you to notice as well that Daniel prayed according to scripture. That is, in first Kings chapter eight, Solomon asked God to give special notice to the prayers of his people when they prayed towards Jerusalem. Let me read it to you.

First Kings eight thirty, I believe it is. And may you hear the supplication of your servant and of your people, Israel, when they pray towards this place? Well, Daniel said, I want some of that. I'll pray according to the way the Bible tells me to pray.

Notice as well here, verse 10, it says that he knelt down on his knees to pray, kneeling in prayer. Do you ever do it ever now? It's just something. Well, I just don't go there.

It doesn't really matter. Your posture in prayer doesn't really matter. Well, no, it does matter.

It doesn't matter everything, but it matters something. Let me put it to you this way. Jesus knelt when he prayed.

Stephen, the first martyr of the church, knelt when he prayed. Peter knelt when he prayed. Paul and other leaders in the church knelt when they prayed.

Luke knelt when he prayed. Daniel knelt when he prayed. Now, surely we can't say anything against it.

Now, some people get legalistic on this point. They act as if there is one posture of prayer that's acceptable before God. And, you know, it's funny because in researching this for myself biblically, I could teach a Bible study tonight on any one of three postures of prayer.

You just pick one, actually four, and I'll make a biblical case that this is the way to have yourself before God. Obviously, kneeling is one of them, right? Well, standing is referred to as a biblical posture of prayer. That was a common one in the ancient world.

Standing with the arms upraised. By the way, do you ever notice that at church sometimes? Perhaps during singing songs of worship, people have their hands raised up, and you think that's the absolute strangest thing I've ever seen in my life. What's wrong with these people? Is this some kind of, you know, underarm deodorant test thing? You know, they want to see.

Well, no, it's the Bible talks about lifting your hands up unto the Lord. It was the Bible times equivalent to folding your hands. This is our cultural thing to do.

In biblical times, they did this. It was a gesture of a lot of things. It was a gesture of reaching out to God.

It was a gesture of surrender. It was a gesture of receiving something from God. And so it's a perfectly wonderful and appropriate gesture.

I don't think there's anything wrong with raising your hands. I do think there's something wrong. If you've determined in your heart, I will not raise my hands.

Now, honestly, you know for yourself, I will just appeal to your own conscience. There's something wrong there, isn't it? Here is a biblical posture of prayer, and you're telling God, I will not do that. Well, I think there's a five letter word to describe that begins with P. It ends with E. It spells out pride.

I can't. I don't want to look foolish. What do they think I'm doing? Oh, good heavens.

Well, of course, we all turn around and laugh at whoever raises their hands here in church, don't we? It's just kind of silly thing inside, but it's very common, right? Every one of us, I think, has battled with those feelings at some time or another. In any regard, you can stand when you pray. You can kneel when you pray.

You can get down on your face when you pray. There's the lying prostrate. There's examples of that in the Bible.

And then also, did you know that it's fine to pray while you're sitting? Matter of fact, I think we could teach a good Bible study on that tonight. And I could even say, and of course, I'm not promoting this, but I'm just offering forth almost playfully that this is the most biblical form of posture of prayer is to sit while you pray and say, well, why? Well, because right now, Jesus is enthroned in the heavens, seated at the right hand of God, and we are seated with him in heavenly places and he intercedes for us. Jesus's posture of prayer is sitting down right now.

So shouldn't we be like our Lord and sit down when we pray? Now, the point of it isn't to say that sitting or standing or kneeling or flat on your face, any of them are any better or worse. Friends, I just want you to examine your heart. And are you telling God I will not do one of these? And so has the Holy Spirit stirred

your heart at a time and said down on your knees.

You need to come to me humbly. It's a humble suffragette. As a beggar before a wealthy Lord, you come to me with that kind of humility.

And do you respond by telling God, no, it's not cool, Lord. See the difficulty there. In any regard, Daniel knelt.

Now, we also see here in verse 10 that he prayed three times a day. He knelt down on his knees three times that day. Daniel knew that though a little prayer is good, much prayer is far better.

Now, I know what you're saying is saying, oh, boy, do I wish that I had the time to pray three times a day? Do a little reality check here. Look at Daniel. Daniel was one of three men administrating an entire kingdom.

Do you honestly think that you have more responsibility in your life than Daniel had in his? Do you think your daytimers more full than Daniel's? I don't think so. Daniel knew he was so busy that he had to spend this time in prayer. And finally, just to look at Daniel's prayer life in verse 10, it says that he knelt down on his knees three times that day and he prayed and gave thanks before his God.

Daniel prayed and gave thanks because great prayer is prayed with thanksgiving. They're like twins going up to heaven, prayer and praise, thanksgiving and petition. They go up together before God.

And so what happens? Here's Daniel just praying in his opener. Now, one thing to consider a common form of construction, a common form, common form of construction in that day was to have an upper room that overlooked an interior courtyard and patio. It's not as if Daniel opened up the windows and put himself on display to the entire community.

He probably just opened it up so that there could be fresh air. And can we praise God for fresh air in prayer sometimes? Just good old fashioned fresh air. You know, there's an old story about Charles Spurgeon when he first came to the New Park Street Church in London, that he one of the things he hated about the building there was that it was so stuffy.

And and he looked up at the windows up, but there were a bunch of windows up at the high top of the city goes, you know, we should bust those out so they get a little ventilation in here. And the deacons of the church wouldn't do anything about it. And so one day they came in and they found that all the windows were broken.

And Spurgeon never admitted to doing it, but he said he'd offer a reward to the man who did because he felt fresh air was important to preaching and to prayer in any regard. He wasn't doing it to be seen of others. It was sort of but he could be seen is the point.

Verse 11. Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God, and they went before the king and spoke concerning the king's decree. Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any God or man within 30 days, except you, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, This thing is true according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.

So they answered and said before the king that Daniel, who's one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O King, or for the decree that you signed, but makes his petition three times a day. And the king, when he had heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him. And he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

Then these men approached the king and said to the king, No, O King, that it is the law of the Medes and the Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed. These men were rejoicing in the fact that they had caught Daniel in this and that they had trapped the king into doing something that he didn't want to do. King Darius did not want to send Daniel in before the lions, but he was trapped by this.

The law of the matter made him trapped in it. And so here he is. Daniel is going to the lions, then verse 16.

So the king gave the command. And they brought the king gave the command and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke saying to Daniel, your God, whom you serve continually, he will deliver you.

Isn't that great? What a witness Daniel had been to this man. What a shining testimony. It was faith and it was faith born out of Daniel's faith in the Lord.

The idea here is kind of like this. Listen, Daniel, I tried my best to save you, but I failed. Now it's up to your God.

And look at what made Daniel's testimony here. Verse 16, your God, whom you serve continually. That's what made Daniel's testimony.

You know, many of us occasionally display godly character and wisdom. We love telling people about those times, right? You know that that one time this week when I displayed godly wisdom and character, you know, we then counteract it by being bad. I don't want to tell you all about the tool I threw this week and broke it clean in half.

But I'll tell you about, you know, the great thing I did this week for the Lord. Daniel was of a great, great character here. He served the Lord continually.

A testimony is made by continual service, but Daniel gets thrown into the den nonetheless. In verse 17, then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his Lord that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed. I think it's interesting here.

We commonly think this was so nobody could get Daniel out. I also think it was so that nobody could get in and make sure that Daniel was actually dead. I think Darius did this as much for Daniel's protection as to prove that it was his God who would rescue him.

Verse 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.

Who had a better night of sleep, Daniel or Darius? Not interesting. In the lion's den, secure in the will of God or tortured by your conscience. That was Darius.

You see, we can be sure that Daniel prayed in the lion's den. You know why? Because it was his habit to pray. He prayed three times a day, and I'm sure one of those times fell within the lion's den.

He prayed in the lion's den. He didn't need to start praying in the lion's den. He just continued his habit of prayer.

You see, friends, here's a principle to grab onto. This was a remarkable occasion. Can we agree? People aren't being thrown into lion's dens every day.

This was a remarkable occasion. But Daniel's ability to stand in the remarkable occasion was prepared by the habitual pattern of his life. In other words, if he would have gone into the lion's den unprepared, I think he would have been lunch.

But because his life was filled with this habitual pattern of a godly walk, he could handle it. He had the faith to withstand in the critical moment. Let me explain it to you this way, and I don't know if it'll connect you.

I've used this illustration before, but it clicks with me. When you were young, like when I was young, maybe you wanted to be a pro baseball player. I sure did.

Second base for the Los Angeles Dodgers. That's what I wanted to be. And so I wanted to emulate baseball stars.

But what I would do is I would emulate them in the games, right? I would slide ahead first, like my hero slid. I would do whatever they did in the games. What I didn't really realize was that they could do what they did in the game because they practiced it all the time.

Now, do you see the point here? Your performance at the critical moment, at the critical occasion is founded on the habitual patterns of your life. And a lot of us just sort of get deceived into this mentality of, Lord, when those remarkable occasions come up, man, I'll be there for you. Don't worry about me, God.

You know, when they ask for the person to stand for the firing squad for the glory of Jesus Christ, put my name on the list. God, I'm right there in the remarkable occasion. I'll stand there.

I think you're deceiving yourself, because if you're not walking for God in the habitual pattern of your life, I don't think you're going to stand in the remarkable occasion. Well, in any regard, what happens here? Verse 19. Then the king rose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.

And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions? Now, if I'm filming this, the movie in my head puts a little humor in here, where Daniel is quiet for about 10 or 15 seconds, doesn't say anything. I'm here, you know, after torturing Darius just for a minute, and then they laugh together.

Well, they didn't laugh, but OK, maybe it wouldn't film the scene that way, but you get the point. Verse 21, then Daniel said to the king, oh, King, live forever. I'm not mad at you, King.

I know you were tricked into this. I still love you, Darius. Oh, King, live forever.

My God sent his angel and shut the lion's mouth so they have not hurt me because I was found innocent before him. And also, oh, King, I've done no wrong before you. Then 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 was found on him because he believed in his God. So there's Darius. He can't sleep all night, you know, and so at the first glimmer of dawn, he's running out to the lions and OK, we can get Daniel out now if he's still alive.

And then he's thinking, look, this is crazy. I mean, look, either he made it through the night or he didn't. It's not like getting there at seven o'clock is going to make getting there seven ten.

Either he's preserved or he's not. But then Daniel says, I'm here. God sent his angels to stop the lion's mouth.

I don't know if Daniel saw the angel, but he knew that it was an angel. Now, the Bible says that angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation. God sends forth angels as special helpers, special messengers.

And who knows how you've been helped by an angel today? You don't even know. Well, Daniel knew on this remarkable occasion, but why was Daniel preserved? Look at it at the end of verse twenty three. Did you see it? Because he believed in his God, Daniel was preserved through faith.

Now, it's true that his cause was righteous. It's true that he was unjustly accused, but those things in and of themselves did not protect him before the lions. Daniel needed a living, abiding faith in God, even in the most difficult circumstances.

I like what one old commentator named John Trapp says about this. He says, though they were savage and hunger starved, yet Daniel was kept from the paws and jaws of these many fierce and fell lions by the power of God through faith. Well, it was the power of God at work, right? But what set the power of God into motion? It was Daniel's prayer.

Look at this. The power of God sent an angel to protect Daniel, but he did it in response to a prayer of believing faith. Friends, you understand.

Your faith can move the power of God. That's mind boggling, isn't it? I mean, God's got a lot of power, right? If I were to invite you to and said, you know, you are a person who can have special influence with a very, very wealthy man, a Bill Gates, a Warren Buffett, you know, some great titan of industry. And you can be close with this person.

And if you stay in close relationship with this person. You can have incredible influence over their resources. So just give me the opportunity.

I could do a lot of good with that kind of power. God moves his power in response to our prayers of faith. But again, it comes from a consistent abiding walk.

Let me show you the chain of events here again. The power of God sent an angel to protect Daniel in response to a prayer of faith coming from a consistent abiding walk. That's real power, as it says in James, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Well, look what happens here, verse 24, and the king gave the command and they brought those men who had accused Daniel and cast them into the den of lions, them, 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. Well, I guess those lions were hungry after all, weren't they? There's no problem with the lions there, right? It's not like they fell sick or anything like that.

No, no, he cast them in. And I have a little theory here. I think Darius would have cast these guys in whether or not Daniel lived or not.

He was not pleased with these men. So they were going in lines, then one way or the other. The only difference is that Daniel got out.

Now, verse 25, then King Darius wrote to all peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth. Peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom, men must tremble in fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God and steadfast forever.

His kingdom is the one that shall not be destroyed and his dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues and he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus, the Persian.

You know, this fulfills a familiar pattern in the book of Daniel. God's people stand firm in their convictions. God honors and protects them.

And then the testimony of that work makes the ungodly see and tell of the greatness of God. If other people can't see the work of God in your life, why not? What's missing there? Maybe it's time to have some talk to God time about that, but the point is clear when we stand firm in godly convictions and honor God, even when it cost us something, others will see that testimony and be impressed. Isn't it valid for us to pray, Lord, let me bear a cost for you, for your glory.

Well, that happened in the very end. It says there, verse 28, Daniel prospered. It's the last link in a long chain in this chapter.

Daniel was plotted against praying, praising, persistently serving, persecuted, protected, preserved, preferred and then finally prospered all throughout the chapter. Friends, God honoring convictions yield God honoring rewards. It's too big for you to do on yourself.

You need a constant and a continual abiding in Jesus Christ and filling of the Holy Spirit. There's no doubt about that. But friends, you'll still be called to make a choice and the Spirit's equipping is there to guide you into the right choice at that critical moment.

Let's pray for our lives in light of such a sterling testimony as Daniel's. Lord, that is our prayer tonight, that you would make us God honoring men and women just like Daniel, that you would give us the kind of life of prayer that Daniel had and not to content ourselves any longer with excuses about a life of prayer with you, about refusing to go deeper in prayer life with you. Lord, I pray that every one of us would be obedient to what your Spirit is speaking to our hearts right now.

About where to go and what to apply from this. Lord, I know you're calling some to prayer, you're calling some to integrity and to confess their compromise and to forsake it. Lord, I know you're calling some of us to just great faith in you at a critical moment.

Make us responsive, fill us with your spirit that we may heed this glorious call. Thank you for loving us so much to send your power, your angels on our behalf to help us in Jesus name. Amen.

Amen.

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