

Standing On His Knees

- Daniel 6:

- **Tonight we will talk about one of the most well-known Old Testament stories in the Bible, Daniel being thrown in the lion's den.**
 - This is a story I remember hearing as a child & I was always fascinated at the courage of Daniel to withstand such a horrific incident & the amazing protecting hand of God on his life.
 - But as we look a little deeper in the life of Daniel, again remember that these stories are included for our growth as Christian men & women.
 - As we look at chapter 6 tonight, I hope that each of us will be encouraged to stand for what's right, refuse to compromise, but above all live for God.
- **READ SCRIPTURE**
- 1. Daniel's Position (6:1-2)**
- **In this story, Daniel is not a young man by any stretch of the imagination. More than likely, he is somewhere around 80-83 years old as he is sent to the lions.**
 - During the Babylonian captivity, he had served under three major kings—Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and now Darius—who served under Cyrus, king of Persia.
- **When Darius came to the throne, he instituted a political team of some 120 governors to rule the kingdom.**
 - To guarantee accountability, Darius appointed "three administrators" over these 120 governors. It was their responsibility to make sure all of these men carried out their tasks in an efficient and honest manner.
 - One of these men of course was Daniel. This in and of itself was an amazing thing, in part b/c of his age.
 - Most leaders had retired from this kind of responsibility.
 - But from a divine perspective, it's easy to see that God, in His sovereignty, had His hand on Daniel's life & wasn't yet finished with him. Like Esther, who became queen in a foreign land, Daniel too had "come to royal position for such a time as this" ([Esther 4:14](#)).
 - Furthermore, Cyrus, the king of Persia, favored the Israelites. It was during the first year of his reign that he encouraged the Jews to return to Jerusalem, promising his personal help to rebuild the temple. He also ordered that all "fifty-four hundred articles of gold and silver" that Nebuchadnezzar had brought to Babylon be returned to Jerusalem ([Ezra 1:1-11](#)). This also explains why Darius who reported directly to Cyrus—would not hesitate to place a Jew in this high position.
 - It wouldn't take long to discover Daniel's credentials. He had served in high positions in the Babylonian government since he was seventeen years old. His reputation as a man of wisdom was outstanding, and his character was impeccable. Though he was a foreigner, he had demonstrated incredible loyalty to his superiors and had performed his tasks admirably.
 - Who interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
 - When all of the wise men of Babylon could not read and interpret the handwriting on the palace wall at Belshazzar's feast, Daniel could.
- 2. Daniel's Character (6:3-9)**
 - a. He Lived Above Reproach (vv.3-5)**
 - i. Why is it important for Christian men & women to live above reproach?

- ii. Whenever Daniel was given a job to do, he did it better than anyone else. This is the story of his life. In fact, in this new position, "because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm."
- iii. The other two men who had been on the same level as Daniel exploded with jealousy. They quickly spread their wicked deceit among a number of their fellow leaders.
- iv. Together, they "tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel and his conduct of government affairs" (6:4a). However, Daniel had performed his tasks so well that these men couldn't even conjure something up that would be believable! We read that "they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him."
- v. But even those that are faithful to God can escape the persecution of the world.

b. He Is Faced With Opposition (vv.5-9)

- i. Unable to find anything wrong in the way Daniel performed his assigned duties, they decided to use one of his strengths (his personal prayer life) to build a case against him.
 - 1. Daniel never hesitated to practice his beliefs in public.
 - a. We should never be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - b. We should never be ashamed to serve God publicly.
 - c. We should never be ashamed of standing up for Him.
 - 2. Knowing Daniel's commitment to his prayer time, his enemies used it as a basis to set up a scheme that would not only bring Daniel down but lead to his execution.
- ii. Why his prayer life? Why would they choose this avenue to bring him down? Because they knew there would be no question regarding what Daniel would do in spite of the proposal they were about to make to the king.
 - 1. Though his life would be in danger, they were convinced that Daniel would not waver in his prayer practice. He had never been unfaithful to or ashamed of his God.
 - a. Wouldn't it be something if our stand for God was this evident to the world?
 - b. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if the worst thing they could dig up on us is how much we loved God?
- iii. Though Daniels' character revealed he was committed & faithful, unfortunately Darius' character revealed that he had a bit of an ego problem. This too would play right into their scheme.
 - 1. But for Darius, this was a serious weakness—in this case, a noticeable blind spot!
 - 2. Combining Daniel's commitment to daily prayer with Darius's tendency to make naive decisions when his ego was involved, they developed a strategy. Their speech before the king speaks for itself:
 - a. *"King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not."*
- iv. All of the other officials were in total agreement with this decree, how could Darius refuse? Furthermore, by signing the decree, this made Darius equal with all their pagan

“gods”. For 30 days, no one could pray to God or any other man without severe consequences.

- v. So in order to make this public, they required that the king sign an actual agreement & make it law.
 - 1. Now again, think about their motive here. If everyone was in agreement, why even make a law?
 - 2. Because they were out for Daniel specifically & they wanted him out of the picture.
- vi. But Daniel remained faithful & continued to pray three times a day, just as his enemies knew he would, and their plot worked just as they had planned.

3. Daniel's Faithfulness (6:10)

a. Circumstances Didn't Dictate His Commitment

- i. Daniel was fully aware that the writing had been signed and this plot to get him was underway. But from the moment he found out, he never wavered in his convictions.
- ii. He more than likely heard about this while he was at the King's palace, "he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."
 - 1. Do you remember when he was first brought under Babylonian captivity? Do you remember when they sought to change his food & alter his convictions?
 - 2. Daniel "resolved not to defile himself" at that very moment. He made his stand at the very beginning. And now, decades later, could he do any less as an old man who had never violated his spiritual convictions?

b. Neither Was He Willing To Compromise

- i. Knowing the consequences of these actions, how easy it would have been for Daniel to rationalize! After all, he *had* been faithful for all these years.
 - 1. Why be concerned about one month?
 - 2. Why pray in public since God hears us in private as well? Certainly God would understand.
 - 3. Why interfere with God's plan to allow him to serve in such a key position in the Persian empire?
- ii. But Daniel never wavered for one moment. This old prophet had a principle within his soul that guided everything he did.
 - 1. There is one significant difference between Daniel's original stand as a fifteen-year old and his decision to continue his prayer routine at age eighty-three. In the first instance, he asked permission from the chief official who was assigned to watch over him (1:8). In this second instance, he did not appeal to anyone.
- iii. Did Daniel know in his heart that God would shut the lions' mouths? I don't think there is any indication according to scripture that his life would be spared, but it didn't matter b/c he knew Who was in control.

4. Daniel's Deliverance (6:11-28)

a. The King's Dilemma (6:11-15)

- i. Daniel's enemies were watching and waiting to report Daniel's behavior to the king. They knew it would happen quickly. And when it did, they quickly reminded Darius of his decree, and the king in turn affirmed his decision.
- ii. When they reported to the King what Daniel had done, the King realized then the HUGE mistake he had made.

1. This was his trusted advisor.
 2. This was one of his most faithful men.
 3. This was his dear friend.
- iii. He knew not that the plot had been set in place. He had been fooled by his own weakness by those closest to him.
1. When pride is blended with our "blind spots," we become terribly vulnerable and can quickly lose perspective. In moments like these, we become too confident in ourselves and we lose focus in our decisions.
- iv. I believe the King wanted to correct his mistake & tried to do so (v.14), but they would hear nothing of it. They came right back at the King & reminded him that his hands were tied (v.15).
1. Not only did he face the prospect of horrible public humiliation, but he could also be dethroned, if not beheaded!

b. The King's Decision (6:16-24)

- i. So, with no way out, Darius accepted reality. He issued the order to put Daniel in the den of lions. However, he did so hoping that Daniel's God would save him.
- ii. The king then returned to his palace, unable to sleep all night long. He even denied himself any form of entertainment that evening and refused to eat. At the crack of dawn, he got up from his bed where he had spent the night tossing and turning and hurriedly made his way to the lions' den.
- iii. With anguish in his voice and hoping against hope, he called out to his trusted administrator, the man he had assigned to oversee his whole kingdom: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" (v.20)
- iv. Do you think he expected to get a response? What about you, would you have expected a response?
 1. "Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."
- v. The King was overjoyed that Daniel was alive & demanded that he be removed from the pit and those who had falsely accused him be thrown in the den—along with their wives and children!
 1. This lesson goes to show us that even innocent people are harmed when sin & wickedness harden our hearts.

c. The King's Decree (6:25-28)

- i. Darius issued a new order that stood out in stark contrast to his first one. In his first decree, he honored himself, actually setting himself up as a god. In this decree, he honored the one true God.
- ii. We are not told how long Daniel lived following this great spiritual victory. However, we do know that he "prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (6:28).
- iii. He continued to be a witness for the God he served and a man the Lord used to help deliver His people from bondage. Daniel continued to serve as a mouthpiece for God—one of the greatest prophets who ever lived.