



*The Most High
God rules over
the kingdoms of
the world and
appoints anyone
he desires to
rule over them.*

(Dan 5:21b NLT)

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Reluctant Sentencing by the King (6:16-18)

6:16 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!" 17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. 18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. (NIV)

6:16 Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and *cast into the den of lions*. The king declared to Daniel, “*May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!*” (ESV)

- After all of his attempts to **save** Daniel had been **exhausted**, the king reluctantly gave the order to have Daniel arrested and “*cast into the den of lions*”.
- Then Darius shouted down to Daniel in the pit, “*May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!*”
- The KJV and NASB translate this statement as a **prediction** that God “*will deliver*” Daniel, whereas the NIV and ESV consider the declaration to be a desire on Darius’s part that God “*may ... deliver*” him.
- **Grammatically** the verb could be translated either way.

6:16 Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, “May *your God, whom you serve continually*, deliver you!” (ESV)

- But the king could not have known with ***certainly*** that Daniel would be delivered.
- In fact, verse 20 indicates that the king was not ***sure*** Daniel ***would*** be delivered – only that he ***hoped*** he would be delivered.
- But the fact that Darius believed it was even ***possible*** that Daniel ***might*** be saved ***could*** be an indication that Daniel had told the king of the great miracles that the God of Israel had performed in the past.
- Darius here characterizes Daniel as “serving” his God “*continually*.”
- This characterization of Daniel by a pagan king indicates that Daniel had set an ***outstanding example*** of service to God.
- We see from this that God will sometimes use a Christian believer’s faithful service to make a positive impression on the unbelieving world around them.

^{6:17} And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, *that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel*. (ESV)

- A stone was placed over the opening of the den and sealed with the signet rings of the king and his nobles so “*that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel*” – in other words, the king eliminated **any possibility** that Daniel might be rescued.
- The way this typically worked is that soft clay would be attached to chains that held the stone in place over the mouth of the entrance, and the king and his nobles would make their personal marks by pressing their signet rings into the clay.
- After the clay hardened, the chains could not be removed without **breaking** the seals.
- No one would be likely to remove a chain that had been sealed in place by the king and some of his highest officials.
- So, Daniel was now **securely locked** in the lion’s den.

6:18 Then the king went to his palace and spent the night *fasting*; no *diversions* were brought to him, and *sleep fled from him*. (ESV)

- Darius must have admired and liked Daniel a great deal.
- When he returned to the palace, he began “*fasting*” and presumably praying (possibly to Daniel’s God) for the Daniel’s safety.
- We’re told that Darius refused all “*diversions*” and “*sleep fled from him*” – an idiomatic way of saying that he was unable to sleep.
- The word translated “*diversions*” appears only here in the Old Testament, and its meaning is uncertain.
- Apparently, it refers to some form of “*entertainment*” which is how the NIV has translated it, but the **exact** meaning is unclear.
- The idea is that the king was too upset about the situation with Daniel to enjoy any of the things he might have normally done for entertainment or amusement.

Daniel's Deliverance (6:19-23)

6:19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 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?" 21 Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! 22 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, O king." 23 The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. (NIV)

6:19 Then, *at break of day*, the king arose and went *in haste* to the den of lions. 20 As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he *cried out in a tone of anguish*. The king declared to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?” (ESV)

- We’re told that the king arose “*at break of day*” and went “*in haste*” to the place of Daniel’s confinement.
- There are undoubtedly a **number** of factors prompting such as early visit:
 - His deep anxiety
 - His sleepless night
 - The remorse he undoubtedly felt
 - His hope that Daniel might be preserved after all ¹
- We’re told that Darius came to the opening of the den and “*cried out*” to Daniel “*in a tone of anguish*”. ²
- While the king’s **actions** demonstrate that he held out the **hope** that Daniel’s God **would** deliver him, his “*tone of anguish*” indicates that he did **not** believe it was **likely**. ²

¹ Barnes, Albert; *The Ultimate Commentary On Daniel: A Collective Wisdom On The Bible* (p. 478)

² Miller, Stephen R., Daniel, vol. 18, *The New American Commentary* (pp. 186–187)

6:19 Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. 20 As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of *the living God*, has *your God, whom you serve continually*, been able to deliver you from the lions?” (ESV)

- Darius’s description of Yahweh as “*the living God*” suggests that the pagan king at least recognized the **reality** of Daniel’s god.
- This would not necessarily mean that Darius had become a ***genuine believer***, for most people in the ancient world recognized the existence of ***many*** gods.
- The faithful, consistent life of Daniel is ***again*** emphasized here by the Darius’ reference to Daniel’s ***continual service*** to his God.

6:21 Then Daniel said to the king, "*O king, live forever!*"²² My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found *blameless* before him; and also before you, O king, I have *done no harm*." (ESV)

- Imagine the great delight and astonishment that must have overwhelmed Darius when he heard the cheerful voice of Daniel reply, "*O king, live forever!*"
- Daniel explained that God had sent his angel to ***protect*** him from the lions because he was "*blameless*" in God's sight and added that he had "*done no harm*" against the king.
- Daniel further explained that the lions had been ***incapacitated*** by God's angel so that they could not harm him.

6:21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his *angel* and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." (ESV)

- Who was this "*angel*" who spent the night in the lion's den with Daniel?
- More than likely he is a member of the angelic host, one of the "*ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation*" (Heb 1:14)
- At least one commentary suggests that this heavenly being ***might*** have been the ***divine*** angelic messenger whom we see so many times in the Old Testament, identified as "*the angel of the Lord*" (cf. Gen 16:11–14; 22:15–16; Exod 3:2–4; Judges 6:11–26; 13:13–23; 1 Chr 21:16–18).
- But without more evidence in the text, we can't be certain that is the case.
- Daniel's experience here is ***also*** mentioned in a ***New*** Testament passage commonly known as the "hall of faith" (Heb 11:4-40) where, at one point, it refers to "*the prophets – who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, *stopped the mouths of lions...**" (Hebrews 11:32b-33).

6:23 Then the king *was exceedingly glad*, and commanded that Daniel *be taken up out of the den*. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and *no kind of harm* was found on him, *because he had trusted in his God*. (ESV)

- Darius “*was exceedingly glad*” to find that Daniel was still alive and ordered that Daniel “*be taken up out of the den*”.
- When God’s faithful servant emerged from the pit, they found no mark of injury (“*no kind of harm*”) on him.
- The text then states the **reason** for Daniel’s miraculous deliverance: “*because he had trusted in his God.*”

King's Reaction to Deliverance (6:24-28)

6:24 At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. ²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! ²⁶ "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. ²⁷ He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." ²⁸ So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. (NIV)

6:24 And the king commanded, and those men who had *maliciously accused* Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions--*they, their children, and their wives*. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces. (ESV)

- Daniel's integrity had been **vindicated** by God's miraculous delivery of him from the lions.
- Now the king commanded that those who had "*maliciously accused*" the prophet should be thrown into the den of lions.
- Daniel **had** been guilty of **breaking** the (unjust) law, but he had been **falsely** accused of **disloyalty** to the king.
- Not only were the conspirators thrown into the den of lions but their **families** were thrown in as well.
- Although it sounds cruel to our ears, executing the wives and children along with a guilty man was a common practice in that day.
- The reason for such a practice that might have been, in part, to prohibit the possibility of later **retaliation** by the family members.

6:24 *And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions--they, their children, and their wives. And before they **reached the bottom of the den**, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces. (ESV)*

- The number of persons executed was probably not all that large.
- Presumably only the other two administrators and perhaps a handful of the 120 satraps were involved in the scheme to kill Daniel.
- Lest someone get the mistaken impression that these lions were old, fat, or just not hungry, Daniel points out that when the **wicked officials** were thrown into the den, the lions **pounced** upon them before they even reached “*reached the bottom of the den*”, overpowering them and crushing all their bones.
- This contrasting result demonstrates the **miraculous** nature of **Daniel's** deliverance.

6:25 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: *"Peace be multiplied to you."* (ESV)

- The king was so impressed with this miracle that he issued a public decree ordering all people throughout the *"earth"* (or "land") to give proper recognition to the God of Daniel.¹
- Darius began by pronouncing a blessing upon his subjects, *"Peace be multiplied to you."*¹
- The language of this decree is remarkably Scriptural in its content.²
- So much so, that one commentary suggests that perhaps Daniel had a part in the composition of it.²

¹ Miller, Stephen R., Daniel, vol. 18, *The New American Commentary* (pp. 188–189)

² Leupold, H. C.; *Exposition of Daniel* (1949); (p. 273)

6:26 *I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. (ESV)*

- Next the king in his decree states that people throughout his kingdom should “*tremble and fear*” the God of Daniel.
- Reasons for such fear and trembling are given here and in the following verse: Yahweh is the “*living,*” eternal (“*enduring forever*”) God whose sovereignty will never end.

6:27 He *delivers and rescues*; he works *signs and wonders in heaven and on earth*, he who has saved Daniel *from the power of the lions*." (ESV)

- Furthermore Yahweh protects ("*delivers and rescues*") his followers from harm and is able to perform great miracles ("*signs and wonders*") both "*in heaven and on earth*".
- Concerning the miracles "*in heaven*," it is not clear if particular miracles or merely the wonders of the universe in general are in view.
- The most recent miracle that the Lord had performed "*on earth*" was the rescue of Daniel "*from the power of the lions*"
- Any god who is able to work this kind of miracle should certainly be feared.
- From this we see that Daniel was delivered not only for his **own** benefit, but so that the Lord could manifest to a lost king and a lost world his reality and power (cf. Exod 20:18–20; Deut 2:25; Josh 2:9).

6:28 So this Daniel *prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.* (ESV)

- Daniel “*prospered*” in that he was elevated to the second highest position in the land under Darius, received great honor among the people, and was blessed in material ways.
- If “*Darius [the Mede – see 5:31]*” and “*Cyrus the Persian*” are two **different** individuals (as some believe) then the phrase “*during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian*” refers to a concurrent rule by both leaders.
- If Cyrus and Darius were just two names or titles given to the **same** person, this phrase can be translated “*during the reign of Darius, even (namely) the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*”

Class Discussion Time

- We love reading a story like this because justice wins out in the end – because “*he had trusted in his God*” Daniel is miraculously delivered and his enemies are vanquished.
- But throughout human history (even in the Bible) we see many examples of faithful Christians who trust in God that are **not** delivered (miraculously or otherwise) from an unjust demise.
- Hebrews 11:33 speaks of those who by faith “*shut the mouths of lions,*” a clear reference to Daniel.
- But immediately after that the writer of Hebrews also speaks of those who “*were tortured and refused to be released ... faced jeers and flogging ... were stoned ... were sawed in two ... were put to death by the sword*” and *suffered other punishments*” (vv. 35–37).
- Though it is natural, and even right, to hope for justice in this life, God has not promised that will always be the case.
- James Montgomery Boice puts it this way: *God calls some to win by living. Others are called to win by dying. But in life or death God rules and we are called to serve him. (Daniel: An Expositional Commentary, p. 72)*
- What are your thoughts on this?

Class Discussion Time

- We see in this chapter that what Daniel knew he practiced openly.
- Christians today will sometimes prefer to keep their belief in God private and and talk about him with others only when asked.
- Daniel did not do that, and in this he showed true greatness.
- Instead of ***hiding*** his convictions, he knelt before his window in the sight of Babylon and prayed as he had always done.
- We need more Daniels who are willing to “open their windows”, so to speak, and honor him before a watching world.
- On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate yourself in sharing this characteristic with Daniel?

Class Discussion Time

- One commentary made this remark about Darius' decree at the end of this section:
- *Darius does not rise above his polytheistic background. He does not confess Daniel's God to be the only true God, but merely raises Him above other gods. Thus, he does not condemn the worship of these other gods. In demanding that men fear and tremble before Daniel's God, Darius requires no more than Nebuchadnezzar had apparently demanded for himself (cf. 5:19 where the same words are used). How tragic it is that in the presence of his mighty miracles, men do not acknowledge God to be the only true God! In the statements made concerning God and His kingdom, Darius is probably influenced by the events of the immediate past and by the instruction which he had received from Daniel. His words, while true enough in themselves, could only have had a hollow meaning for himself. (Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* p.139)*
- Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Class Discussion Time

- We saw in our text today an illustration of how God will sometimes use a Christian believer's faithful service to make a positive impression on the unbelieving world around them.
- Have you ever seen an example of this in your own life or perhaps in the life of another Christian that you know that you would be willing to tell us about?

