



Potomac Hills

Presbyterian Church, PCA



By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

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Daniel 6:1-28

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English Standard Version

“Daniel in the Lion’s Den”

This is the 11th sermon in the series on the book of Daniel entitled,
“A Broken World and a Sovereign God.”

Daniel 6:1-28

“It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. ³ Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”

⁶ Then these presidents and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, “O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.” ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. ¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. ¹² Then they

came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, “O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.”¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.”

¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. ¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.”

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!”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. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

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?” 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.” 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. 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.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: “Peace be multiplied to you. 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.

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.”

²⁸ So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

Heavenly Father, once again we have come to Your Word and today we find a favorite passage of many people, yet a passage that we consistently fail to fully understand. Lord, open our ears to truly hear. And we ask that by the power of the Holy Spirit, use this passage to help us know

what it means to pray and what it means to have faith and why we desperately need both. Do this for each of us, this morning, in Jesus' name, and for His glory, Amen.

INTRODUCTION: *Conspiracy Theory*

Twelve years ago, there was a Mel Gibson movie entitled ***Conspiracy Theory***. In this movie, Mel Gibson played a New York taxi driver named Jerry Fletcher who was an outspoken critic of the government. He has conspiracy theories for everything ... from aliens to political assassinations. He makes complicated scenarios of conspiracies and publishes them in a newsletter sent out to five people. Then one of these conspiracy theories seems to actually be true. Without giving away key parts of the plot, he becomes convinced that he's now the personal target of an elaborate government plot, demonstrating the truth of the old saying, "Just because you're paranoid, it doesn't mean they're not out to get you."

Yet the movie also casts light on the true mental illness of paranoia. People who suffer from this disease don't necessarily see delusions or hear voices, their perceptions of what's happening may be perfectly normal. Rather the disorder stems from a mistaken understanding of **WHY** these particular events are happening. They see a helicopter pass overhead and conclude that it's part of a secret government plot to monitor their movements; or they see a man in a restaurant look their way and they think that he's plotting to kill them. The helicopter and the man are both real, but their significance is misunderstood. The paranoid man wrongly thinks that people are plotting to hurt him and there's dangers lurking behind every bush.

As a result, his life is **wracked** with fear and worry.

But here we're in the Book of Daniel, and it's pretty obvious that Daniel's life could easily be described as the **reverse** of paranoia. He lived in a world in which there **really were** people out to get him, there were regularly conspiracies **against him**, he was constantly threatened by the danger of physical harm, and yet ... he seems to exhibit a peace with his circumstances that is simply remarkable.

It's not like he failed to understand the world around him. He knew that he was living in a dangerous world, a world filled with lions, not all of whom were caged in pits. Yet at the same time Daniel had a true understanding of **why** these things were happening and, most importantly, **who** was in control.

Daniel knew that his God was sovereign even over the most fearsome dangers that roamed the world. As a result he was able to experience a profound peace in the midst of his trials and tribulations, just as if life was going along rather smoothly. And so, if we want to have peace like Daniel had, and if we're going to be able to trust that everything **actually will** work out for good in the end, in spite of the adversity and disappointment that seem to enter our lives on a regular basis, then I think we had best learn the lessons that this chapter has to offer us.

And so, with that in mind, let's continue our study of the Book of Daniel, since we're not following this in chapter order but chronologically, we've skipped back to chapter 6. Last week, we took a look at how Daniel survives all these years "***in the midst of a powerful, idolatrous culture.***" This week we're going to see what enables him to do that. And the first thing we see is ...

v. 1-5: THE PILGRIM LIFE OF DANIEL ¹

¹ The Introduction, Exposition of the text, and Conclusion are adapted from *Daniel: Reformed Expository Commentary* by Dr. Ian Duguid, pages 90-104; *The Communicator's Commentary: Daniel* by Sinclair Ferguson, pages 124-143 (republished as *The Preacher's Commentary: Daniel*); *ESV Study Bible*,

“It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. ³ Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”

The first thing we see in this chapter is that Daniel has learned how to live as a pilgrim. From the beginning of this book, from his arrival in Babylon in chapter one when he was a teen, Daniel has spent his life **IN** this culture, but not **OF** this culture. On the one hand, he never withdrew from the Babylonian culture to avoid getting stained by it. On the other hand, he has, in fact, now served the Babylonian empire faithfully for some seventy years. And even after Babylon was taken over by the Persians, he continued to serve faithfully. Belshazzar had been replaced by Darius, but Daniel kept serving. And, according to our text, Daniel served the empire so well that he kept getting promoted. And now he was one of the key leaders in the entire empire.

Even while he served these foreign empires, he was never shaped by their values. Corruption is a major concern in our world today, but it seems that it was just as rampant in the Ancient Near East. And yet Daniel’s life was so free of corruption and negligence that his enemies couldn’t find anything to use against him, even after searching diligently.

We’re certainly familiar in our own day with the kind of scrutiny that takes place whenever someone’s nominated for office in our country. There’s been several people nominated to serve in the new administration that have had to withdraw from consideration after some skeleton in their closet comes to light.

But, I wonder, how many of us have lives that can withstand that kind of scrutiny? Indeed, if we were the ones under the microscope, would the investigators come back with empty hands and say, “Sorry. You might as well stop digging for dirt on this person. His life is utterly above reproach.” That’s what his enemies said about Daniel in verses 4 and 5. They recognized that they weren’t going to find anything wrong with his life *“unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”*

Yet Daniel’s goodness didn’t win him any friends. Quite the contrary, his faithfulness to God earned him some powerful enemies. Some sought to bring him down, probably because they’re jealous of his success. Others turned against him because of his incorruptibility which limited their own ability to manipulate the system for personal gain.

Truth is, we live in a hostile world and we not only need to recognize that, but we need to be prepared for it. The Apostle Paul warned the Thessalonian church in **1 Thessalonians 3:4**, *“For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know.”* And the Apostle also told Timothy, **2 Timothy 3:12**, *“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* We should expect opposition as a simple fact of life.

Believers around the world know this from their own experience, and we try to highlight that several times a year. Yet here in the prosperous and supposedly tolerant west we've come to expect our lives as Christians to run smoothly and successfully, **at least if** we're professing to follow Jesus. We think the phrase, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life" means that we shouldn't experience any form of unpleasantness.

And yet, as I read the Bible, it seems that unpleasantness is part and parcel of the Christian life. God never promises easy. He has lots of promises in the Scriptures ... easy isn't one of them. Persecution is. Persecution and hardship come to us in a variety of forms and from all directions, yet we're told that these are things that are supposed to mark our lives as Christians in a fallen world.

It may come as mockery and isolation at school, conflict or trouble at work, or simply being regarded by others as peculiar and strange, but one way or another we should expect to suffer for the sake of Christ.

David Wayne is a PCA Pastor up near Baltimore. He's battling cancer right now and it's been pretty tough times for him. He blogs about his fight with cancer regularly, and since he's one of the best known Christian bloggers in this country, lots of people have been following along. In light of what I was studying about Daniel this week, his recent post really hit home. Listen to what he wrote ...

"A friend and I were recently talking about the trials of life and we were discussing the lessons learned from trials and how we would like to learn those lessons and get them over with ... and thus have an end to the trials. I got to thinking about this later and realized that such thoughts demonstrate a deficient view of suffering. The thinking goes that God sends trials to teach us a lesson and thus, we should expect relief once the lesson is learned. When the trial continues beyond what we expected or hoped we wonder what is wrong with us — we must not have learned enough from them. So we apply ourselves that much harder to "learning" from the trials in hopes they will be relieved.

But it occurs to me that such a view does not comport well with reality. One of Francis Schaeffer's famous tests of the validity of a worldview is that a true worldview fits with reality.

The problem is that some suffering leads to ever greater suffering, and it can't be that the sufferer is always obstinate and unlearning in such a situation. Further, some suffering ends in death, not deliverance from the trial. This is certainly the case with believers through the centuries who have suffered for their faith, and I am also thinking particularly of modern believers in places like China whose suffering seems to lead only to further suffering.

It can hardly be said that Jesus needed to learn a lesson on the cross, the learning of which would have terminated the experience of the cross. So with that in mind we need to expand our understanding of God's purposes in suffering.

I'll issue one caveat on this - I don't mean to deny that suffering is a great teacher, it may be the greatest teacher a Christian will ever have. It wouldn't be far off the mark to think of it as a means of grace. I know that I am certainly trying to pay close attention to what God is teaching me through my recent trials.

*So while acknowledging that suffering has a teaching focus in the life of a believer, I think we ought to expand our view of suffering to see it **as a means of witness**. I know that many do, but maybe this ought to be given the greater weight."*

Pilgrims remember these things. Pilgrims understand that the world is not our home, and therefore, we shouldn't be surprised if things don't always go our way. The Apostle Peter once wrote, in a quote that I have on my office wall, **1 Peter 4:12-13**, "*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were*

happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed."

Daniel's life confirms these words. He's faithfully following God in a foreign land and despite a lack of paranoia; people are, in fact, out to get him. And that sets up the conflict that's at the heart of this passage — a conflict of ...

v. 6-11: **PLOT VERSUS PRAYER** ²

"Then these presidents and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever!" ⁷ All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction. ¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. ¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God."

Daniel's enemies know that in order to bring a charge against him that would have to engineer a clash between the law of his God and the law of the state. They knew if they could put Daniel in a situation where he was forced to choose between the two he would choose obedience to God first.

Once again, this observation should be somewhat convicting for us. Daniel's enemies were confident that he would rather die than disobey God. They knew he would go to the lions before giving up prayer. Is there **anyone** in our lives that would say that about us? Probably not.

And so Daniel's enemies convince the king to issue a decree that for 30 days no one could petition any god or man except for the king himself, on pain of being thrown into the lions' den. Most likely, Darius viewed this as a political move rather than a religious one, a means of uniting the kingdom by identifying himself as the sole mediator between the people and the gods. Thus it somewhat functioned in the same way as Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue.

Now there's a number of different way in which Daniel could have responded. You or I might have rushed before the king to protest the unfairness of the new law. Perhaps we'd go home in tears to complain about it. When Daniel hears about the new law, however, he continues to do what he's always done. Three times a day, it was his habit to go to his room to pray, kneeling down and giving thanks, notice this, end of verse 10, ***as he had done previously.***"

Note that last phrase — ***as he had done previously.***" For perhaps 85 years Daniel had prayed three times a day. I did the math and asked myself, "How many times would Daniel have prayed if he prayed three times a day for 85 years?" The answer comes out to over 93,000 prayers. No wonder he simply went back to his room and started praying. An 85-year habit is hard to break. He wasn't about to stop praying just because some plotting princes threatened his life. After all, he was 85, he wasn't going to live forever anyway, and he wasn't afraid to die. So when they tricked Darius into signing the 30-day law, Daniel just went ahead with his daily routine. No big deal. He went home, knelt down, faced toward Jerusalem, and offered his

2 A small part of this section is adapted from the sermon "How to Tame Lions" by Rev. Ray Pritchard, Calvary Memorial church, Oak Park, IL, 1/23/00, www.keepbelieving.com

prayers to God. He did it knowing that his adversaries would catch him.

Lest it be thought a small thing to pray three times a day, consider this. At Potomac Hills we have over 200 people who attend each Sunday. Suppose each of us decided to pray three times a day. That would total almost a quarter-million prayers offered to God by our congregation each year! If all of us would begin to pray on a regular basis, the volume of prayers going to heaven would dramatically increase, and we would see remarkable answers from God.

But what I find remarkable here in Daniel 6 is **not** that this latest crisis had driven him to his knees, but that it didn't disrupt his **regular habit of prayer**. He didn't hide himself away to pray. And the text doesn't tell us that he cried out to God about this latest injustice, but it says he **gave thanks**, just like he normally did.

He's facing imminent death, knowing that his enemies would surely see him and use his prayers against him, and yet, Daniel's on his knees, giving thanks.

Here's a good test of our prayer lives — how much of your time and energy in prayer is spent complaining about your circumstances and asking for things to be different — versus how much time is spent giving thanks for God's overwhelming goodness. The more clearly we see who God is and what great things He's done for us, the more consistently we'll focus on thanking Him, regardless of our particular circumstances at the time.

Apparently the focus of Daniel's prayer life, which we saw last week in Daniel 9, was pleading that God would show mercy on His land and on His temple, which now lay desolate. However, in view of what was about to happen, it must have appeared to Daniel that his prayer wasn't going to be answered. The plotters come and find him praying just as he always did. Since Daniel prayed this way somewhat publicly three times a day, it didn't take a great deal of skill to catch him in the act. Surely God could have closed their eyes as easily as He later closed the mouths of the lions, so that Daniel could pray without hindrance. But His purpose was not to save Daniel **from** trials but to save Daniel **through** trials.

Just as it was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, there are lessons here that Daniel and all those around him needed to learn, lessons that could be learned **only** by going into the lions' den.

And that's an important lesson for us as well. God is not committed to our **comfort**. He's not committed to making our path **smooth**. He's committed to **sanctifying** us and demonstrating His own glory in and through us. And oftentimes, that commitment means subjecting these earthen vessels to pressures that would surely shatter us ... were not His grace sufficient.

The Lord will take you into the eye of the storm ... if for no other reason to show you that He's the master of the storm and that He can make sure your fragile vessel makes it safely to the other shore. His wonderful plan for your life is to sanctify you through **trials** and **tribulations**.

Again, listen to the Apostle Peter as he confirms this truth, **1 Peter 1:6-7**, *"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith — more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

And trials and tribulations are exactly what Daniel faced ... as we see in ...

v. 12-16: THE PROSECUTION OF DANIEL

“Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, ‘O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?’ The king answered and said, ‘The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.’”¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, ‘Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.’”¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him.¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, ‘Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.’”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!’”

Now the king figures out what’s going on, that his advisors have manipulated him to act against Daniel. He’s sorry about putting his faithful and honest servant in this position and he seeks a way to rescue Daniel from this fate. But he can’t see a way out of it without losing face and sacrificing his own credibility among the leaders in the empire. And so Darius abandons Daniel to his fate in the lions’ den. And yet, Darius’ last words to Daniel point to another source for help, verse 16, **“May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!”**

Which brings us to the next point in this story, which is ...

v. 17-24: THE PRESERVATION OF DANIEL

“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.¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.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?’”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.’”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.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.”

Here comes the irony — the story now contrasts the experience of Darius and Daniel during the night. Darius returns to his palace, where he spends a sleepless and harried night, unable to enjoy any of the usual comforts of a king. At dawn, he gets up and hurries to the lions’ den, crying out for Daniel as he arrives.

Meanwhile, Daniel responds to the king’s troubled cry as calm and peaceful as if he spent the night in his own fluffy bed, rather than with the lions, verses 21-22, *“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.”*

Contrary to all expectations, Daniel spent a far more comfortable night in the smelly lions’ den than the king did, even though he was surrounded by royal luxury. You can almost

imagine ... Daniel leaning back on the soft, warm, furry lion, talking with the angel about heavenly things. His lodging turns out to be a den of angels rather than a den of lions, since the angel shut the mouths of the lions and kept Daniel safe.

Darius has every pleasure that ancient world had to offer, yet he couldn't enjoy any of them, while Daniel had nothing except the presence of God and enjoyed a good night's rest. It's a vivid picture that our peace doesn't come from possessions ... but rather peace comes from the presence of God.

And it's not as if the lions aren't capable of eating anybody, those who falsely accused Daniel were tossed in and the text says, end of verse 24, "*before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.*"

And what we see is that the heavenly court was the only one whose decision really counted. The Most High God holds the true power of life and death, not any earthly king. And in telling the king of his own innocence, Daniel's just living up to his name, which means "**My God is the judge.**" God did, in fact, answer his prayers and show him mercy, while the conspirator's fate demonstrates that they had been judged and found guilty by God, not just the earthly king, thus confirming the justice of their death sentence.

But the story doesn't end there. There's one more lesson out there. And we learn this from the lips of King Darius, who understands what has happened, and it results in the king giving ...

v. 25-28: PRAISE FOR THE KING

"Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you."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.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."²⁸ So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

Now we see that Darius himself, one of the great kings of the ancient world, is forced to confess that the king who truly lives forever is the God of heaven, not the rulers of the earth. In response to Daniel's deliverance, Darius issues a counterdecree nullifying his original edict. In this new decree he commands the people to **fear** and **reverence** the God of Daniel, the living God who is able to **deliver** and **rescue** and **save**.

The Lord had once again brought the ruler of the mightiest of empires to acknowledge His greatness and power, as well as the fact that His is the only kingdom that would truly last forever.

This rounds off the story of Daniel's life, and puts his experience in the lions' den into the broader context. It reminds us that Daniel's entire life was spent in exile. Yet, as the closing note of chapter 6 reminds us, God preserved him alive and well throughout the whole time, enabling him to prosper under successive kings, until the time of King Cyrus, when his prayers for Jerusalem finally began to be answered. Cyrus was God's chosen instrument to bring about the Jews return from exile, when he issued a decree that they could return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem, a story we read about in Ezra and Nehemiah, and which we find referred to in **2 Chronicles 36:22-23**, "*Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:*"²³ "Thus

says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all His people, may the Lord His God be with Him. Let him go up.'

As far as we know, Daniel never returned home to his beloved Judah. His reward would have to wait until the heavenly Jerusalem. And yet, in the experiences of Daniel and his three friends, God demonstrated that He could keep His people safe in the midst of their enemies. Life in exile would never be easy, nor would it ever be home. However, through the faithfulness of God, it was possible for His people to survive as strangers in a strange land and as aliens in exile, serving the empire, yet looking forward to the city yet to come.

This is how Daniel 6 addresses us. For we too are strangers in a strange land living as aliens in this world. We should learn from Daniel's experience that the world in which we live is a dangerous place. This world is not our home and it never will be. Therefore, in the midst of our greatest suffering, even persecution, we can have a peace that astounds the world, for the Lord holds both us and our oppressors in His hand.

But does Daniel 6 really give us a true picture of persecution and suffering? Isn't it true that for every Daniel, whom God delivers from the lions' den, there have been hundreds and thousands of nameless martyrs whom God didn't deliver? Haven't faithful Christians suffered tremendously over the years, and are still suffering today? Where is God in those situations? Are those believers less faithful to God or any less important to God than Daniel was?

To answer those questions, we need to see that Daniel 6 gives us **more** than a model on how God deals with suffering or an example of how to stand firm when faith is tested. Rather, I think to answer the hard questions, we have to understand that Daniel 6 is a **foreshadowing** in history of the verdict that will be delivered on all believers on the great and final judgment day of the Lord.

And that's because it's ...

CONCLUSION: A Foreshadowing of the Cross

Daniel endured the test of the lions' den, emerging safely out on the other side, because God judged him and found him not guilty. However, the unbelievers, who plotted against Daniel, were found guilty and **crushed** by the judgment of God. And on the last day, all those who are in Adam will be found guilty and will share their fate; while all those who are in Christ will be found not guilty and will share His fate.

This shows us how Jesus fulfilled Daniel 6. Like Daniel, Jesus was falsely accused by His enemies and brought before a ruler, Pontius Pilate, who unsuccessfully sought to deliver Him before handing Him over to a violent death.

Like Daniel, Jesus was condemned to die, and His body placed in a sealed pit so that His situation couldn't be changed by human intervention. Jesus went even deeper than Daniel, however, He didn't merely face the **threat** of death, He faced **death itself**. Although Jesus was innocent, He suffered the fate of the guilty. There was no angel to comfort Him with the presence of God; on the contrary, He was left alone and abandoned, suffering the fate that we deserved.

Yet, Jesus' experience was itself a foreshadowing of the final judgment, a declaration ahead of time of the verdict of the heavenly court. Jesus died for our sins, not His own, and so ultimately death had no power over Him. Jesus didn't remain in the grip of the tomb, but God raised Him from the dead, precisely because the heavenly court found Him not guilty.

What is more, when Jesus emerged from the tomb on the first Easter morning, He

brought with Him God's stamp of acquittal not only for Himself but for all those who, by faith, are in union with Christ. When Daniel came forth from the lions' den, he came out alone. But when Jesus came forth from the tomb, He came out as **the head of a mighty company of people who've been redeemed from the pit** through His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. And whoever believes in Jesus will receive the same verdict from the heavenly court that He did, for **His righteousness** will be counted as theirs.

The people that Jesus redeemed through His death and resurrection aren't superbelievers like Daniel. Most of us are ordinary sinners, people who constantly cave in to the unrighteous demands of the empire. And it doesn't look like this motley crew has much to commend it. Yet even someone as deeply sinful as you and me can be found beautiful before a holy and perfect God because He sees the end of the process — He sees the glorious church that He promises to present to Himself without flaw or blemish.

My salvation ... your salvation ... rests not on our ability to "Dare to be a Daniel," but solely on the perfect obedience of Christ in my place. In the midst of trials and temptations, **that** is where my comfort is to be found — in the finished work of Christ. And for that, His grateful people said ... Amen.

Think about what Christ has done for you. And then thank Him in prayer.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

Heavenly Father, we've come before You again as people of little faith and less prayer. Build us up in such a way that we live according to that faith we profess. Enable us to recognize the evil around us and remind us that one day You will be sending Jesus back to make all things right. Come soon, Lord Jesus, we pray, in the Name of the One who claims us as His own and clothes us with His own righteousness, Jesus Christ, who lives, and reigns, and is coming again. Amen.

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Daniel 6:26-27 (The Message)

"Daniel's God ... is the living God, world without end. His kingdom never falls. His rule continues eternally. He is a savior and rescuer. He performs astonishing miracles in heaven and on earth. He saved Daniel from the power of the lions."

This is your God.