

DANIEL - PART 6

Faithful!

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Daniel 6
Subject:	What happened after Daniel was thrown into the lions' den for continuing to honor God
Complements:	God delivered Daniel from the lions' den king Darius honored the God of heaven.
Exegetical idea:	When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den for continuing to be faithful to God, God delivered Daniel from the lions' den and king Darius honored Daniel's God.
Homiletical idea:	The LORD God is faithful.
Purpose:	To testify to the faithfulness of God and to encourage my hearers to trust in God!

Introduction

Peace be multiplied to you! I am Daniel, prophet of the Most High God. I'm sitting here amazed at what just happened! King Darius the Mede just issued a decree honoring the God of heaven. Listen to his declaration:

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 and fear before the God of Daniel.**

For He is the living God and steadfast forever.

His kingdom is the one which 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!

What an amazing decree. It's true! The God of heaven did deliver me from the power of the lions! Unfortunately, not from the smell of the lions! But I'm not complaining. Even the smell of my garment is a testimony that I was delivered from certain death by the power of the living God!

May I share my story with you? I'm an old man now, as you can see. I have long since passed my 80th year. So I have many stories to tell. Let me begin with my most recent adventure. When the kingdom of Babylon was overthrown by the armies of King Cyrus, I wasn't sure what would happen next. The Medes and the Persians were crushing all who opposed them. Few prisoners are taken. Especially old men like myself. But God showed His faithfulness to me. Not only was my life spared, but God granted me favor in the eyes of king Darius the Mede who was installed as ruler in Babylon.

Darius was a good man, though a little young and inexperienced. He was only 62 at the time! That's young compared to me! But he had a teachable spirit. And he demonstrated good organizational skills. He set 120 satraps over the kingdom. He also appointed three governors to oversee the 120 satraps. And to my surprise, king Darius asked me to serve as one of those three governors. Me. Daniel. I was shocked! I wasn't part of his court. I wasn't a Mede or a Persian. I was associated with the kingdom that had just been overthrown. But king Darius recognized that the Spirit of the LORD was upon me. And so he asked me to serve as one of his chief government officials.

I determined that I would serve king Darius faithfully, and so bring honor to the God of heaven. And God blessed my labors. Much more than I deserved. In fact, it reminded me of the

time when I first came to Babylon. I determined to honor God at that time also, even in the small decisions, like the food that I ate. And God gave me wisdom far beyond my natural abilities.

Well, it was happening again, even though I'm an old man now and my mind isn't quite as sharp as it used to be! But God was blessing labors in the service of king Darius. In fact, king Darius was even considering making me the chief of the three governors. That's when the trouble started. At least, that's when I became aware of the jealousy and envy of the other governors and satraps. They began to watch my every move. They couldn't understand why I would serve king Darius with such devotion. "Daniel must have a secret plan," they thought. They judged me by their own motives, imagining that I was as greedy and power-hungry as themselves.

Meetings were called. Unofficial meetings, of course, and I was not invited. I suspected what was going on, but I chose to allow God to defend me. He has always been faithful to me. Always. When I heard that the other governors had used flattery to convince king Darius to hastily sign a strange decree, I sensed that this decree was somehow an expression of their jealousy and envy. And I was right. The decree stated that no one would be permitted to make a request of any god or man except king Darius for 30 days.

These jealous rulers had learned something about me from their spying. It is my practice to devote myself to prayer three times a day: in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. I commune with the God of heaven. This decree forced me to make a choice. Would I continue to honor God and be faithful to Him, or would I compromise to save my own life? This was the test.

As I thought about the situation in which I found myself, I was reminded of another situation that happened many years ago to my three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They also faced a test on the plain of Dura. I was absent that day. But I rejoiced when I heard that they had chosen to remain faithful to God. And God was faithful to them. In the midst of the fiery furnace! God was with them. And He was faithful to them.

Now, I faced a similar test. Lions instead of fire. An old man instead of young men. But the test was the same. Would I continue to be faithful to God? The decision was clear. It was a decision that I had made as a young man when I was about to be taken captive by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. My parents knew that they would probably never see me again. We prayed and wept together. They reminded me of my name: Daniel. God is my judge. And they encouraged me to be faithful to God.

I've noticed that once you've made that decision, life becomes less complicated. You don't always have to ask, "Will I be faithful to God in this situation?" You've made up your mind. That's what my three friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah told king Nebuchadnezzar. "We've already made up our minds. We don't need a lot of time to reconsider our decision. We've made up our minds that we will be faithful to God.

And now, many years later, I was facing my fiery furnace. And I rejoiced that my decision was clear. Be faithful to God! And so I continued to commune with God in prayer, three times a day! I actually prayed all through the day, but these were my special times of communion with God. I knew that spies were watching me. And I knew that soon the accusations would come.

I felt bad for king Darius when he realized that he had been trapped by these devious,

power-hungry rulers. He tried to cancel the decree, but they would not let him. It was a law of the Medes and the Persians which cannot be revoked. So I was taken to the lions' den. The lions were normally used for hunting, as you probably know. Lion hunting was the sport of kings. But the lions' den was also a quick and easy way to dispose of any trouble makers. And at least in the eyes of the jealous governors and satraps, I was a trouble maker.

There were two ways to access the lions' den: a ramp, down which the lions would be driven, and an opening in the roof, through which food would be dropped. It was much too dangerous to bring food through the main entrance to the lions' den. Any servant carrying food for the lions would become part of the meal! So the food was dropped through an opening in the roof of the den. And last night, I was the food!

As I was dropped into the pit, I could hear the lions roaring. They knew that it was feeding time. It was like falling down into a grave. This was a place of death, and I knew that only a miracle of God could bring life out of the grave. But I was determined to honor God whether in life or in death.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, my body struck the cool, damp earth. I waited for the lions to pounce. But there was no movement in the lions' den. Perhaps the lions were just waiting for the right moment to attack me. The last words that I heard that night came from the mouth of my distressed king Darius: **“Daniel, your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.”**

Isn't that amazing? A pagan king said that! I recorded his words so I would never forget them. **“Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.”** That confession brought joy to my heart! I already knew that God would deliver me, one way or another. Just

like Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. And however He chose to deliver me, I was determined to be faithful to Him. But right there, in the midst of my test, I rejoiced to hear the confession of king Darius. “Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.”

His words reminded me of the word of the LORD given through the Psalmist, hundreds of years ago. The LORD, the Most High God, gave this promise: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you. And you will honor Me.” “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.”

Perhaps you’re wondering what happened to me in the lions’ den. Well, obviously, I survived! The lions didn’t eat me! The LORD sent an angel, one of His heavenly messengers that excel in strength, and that angel shut the lions’ mouths! It was completely dark down in that lions’ den. I could hear the heavy breathing of the lions. At times, I could even feel the warmth of their breath. And even smell their breath! And many other smells as well!

I didn’t sleep that night. Not because I was afraid. I was actually filled with a wonderful peace. The prophet Isaiah was right when he said, “You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You!” I didn’t sleep for two reasons. I was excited to see that God was going to do! He had come down to meet with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in the fiery furnace! I didn’t want to sleep through something like that! But I also stayed awake because I was praying for king Darius. I could only imagine how he was feeling. I told you, he is a good man. I was praying that God would use this time to bless king Darius and to speak to his heart.

King Darius didn’t sleep either. He was pacing back and forth. Half mad, half sad! Very early this morning, when the first rays of dawn could be seen through the cracks by the

opening of the lions' den, I heard the sound of footsteps. Someone was approaching the mouth of the den. It didn't sound like a soldier. Who was out there? My question was soon answered! I heard a grieving king cry out, **“Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?”**

I had to smile. Not just because the king had come. But because of his words. Servant of the living God. With joy in my heart, I cried out:

O king, live forever!

**My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths,
so that they have not hurt me.**

The king was overjoyed! And I was also filled with joy. King Darius ordered ropes be brought and that I be lifted up out of the lions' den. When our eyes met, I could see tears in his eyes. I sensed a closeness to him that I had never experienced before. He smiled and look straight into my eyes: “Daniel, servant of the living God!”

But then his countenance changed. He looked towards to governor's rooms, and then he summoned his personal soldiers. “Go! Seize those men who plotted against Daniel. Throw them, and their wives and children into the lions' den.”

I turned away in sadness. I did not desire vengeance or retribution. But I realized that these government officials would not escape the wrath of the king. I heard later that, when they were thrown into the lions' den, the lions overpowered them, crushed their bones, and devoured them before they reached the bottom of the den. Their evil deed not only cost them their lives, but also the lives of their wives and children. That brought even greater sadness to my heart.

But in the midst of that sadness, I am also rejoicing because of the faithfulness of God. I

told you at the beginning of my story: God has always been faithful to me. I don't know what the future holds. But this much I know: God is faithful. He has been faithful to me all of my life. And He will not leave me now. God is faithful. And I will honor Him.

What test you are facing in your life right now? We all face trials, don't we? They are not of God's making. They are the work of the enemy. But whatever trial you face, remember that God is faithful. He will be faithful to you. Don't turn away when you need Him the most. Stand true. Stand strong. He will never leave you or forsake you. Be strong and of good courage. Do not fear or be afraid. For the LORD our God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.

I am reminded of the word of the LORD through the prophet Jeremiah: "Through the Lord's mercies, we are not consumed because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, says my soul. Therefore I hope in Him."

I rejoice today that God is faithful! When people around you are unfaithful, God is faithful. Even when those closest to you are unfaithful, God is faithful. And if there are times when because of inward weakness or outward pressure, you are unfaithful, God is still faithful. I rejoice today in the faithfulness of God! Don't you? And I pray that whether in life or in death we would always remain faithful to Him.

For He is the living God and steadfast forever.
His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed,
And His dominion shall endure to the end.