

# Faith in Times of Trouble

Devotional Reading: Matthew 8:18-27

Background Scripture: Daniel 6:1-28

Today's Scripture: Daniel 6:10-11, 14, 16, 19-23, 26-27

## I. Violation and Consequence

### Daniel 6:10-11, 14, 16

**10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, 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.**

**11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.**

**14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.**

**16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.**

10. Daniel experienced a high level of privilege (and wealth) as an official of the king. Houses in ancient Babylon would have had a flat rooftop that functioned as another room or patio. Frequently, these rooftop patios would have included walls and windows for privacy. However, for

a man in Daniel's position, his prayers could not have remained secret, even if he desired.

The Law of Moses includes general commands regarding the people's daily remembrance of God's commands. However, it did not command kneeling and praying *three times a day*.

11. *These men* were those who had pushed Darius to pass the decree that only the king was to be worshipped. Daniel's open windows made catching him in the act quite simple. He was *praying and making supplication* as was his habit without regard for any danger it posed.

14. The phrase *these words* refers to Daniel 6:12-13, in which the king's officials reminded Darius of his decree and then revealed Daniel's disobedience to it. After hearing this, Darius realized how his officials had manipulated him for their selfish gain. They had used deception and Darius's naivete to launch their plan. He had inadvertently been a pawn in their scheme against Daniel. Rather than direct his displeasure toward Daniel, the king was *displeased* with his own behavior. The king had failed to see the underlying reason for the officials' request for the decree.

The king exerted himself in order to find grounds *to deliver* Daniel from the consequences of breaking the decree. "The law[s] of the Medes and Persians"

are only mentioned in this narrative (Daniel 6:8, 15) and in the book of Esther (Esther 1:19). The exact stipulations of these laws are unknown because there is no nonbiblical reference to them. Simply revoking the decree was out of the question. For the king to provide a way out for Daniel seemed impossible.

16a. The officials had forced the king's response, and he could not revoke the decree that initiated this chain of events. If Darius had responded in any way other than to approve the punishment, he would have revealed a disrespect for his culture and law. So he *commanded* that the previously determined consequences were to be leveled against Daniel.

16b. Darius likely practiced a form of polytheism—the belief in many gods. As a result, if he believed in the same *God* that Daniel served, it was not a belief in God as the only true God. The text is unclear whether we should interpret the word as a form of skeptical sarcasm or a genuine prayer, though the latter is more likely.

## II. Release and Vindication

### Daniel 6:19-23, 26-27

**19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.**

**20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?**

**21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.**

**22 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.**

**23 Then was the king exceeding 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 manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.**

**26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.**

**27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.**

19. The king's rising *very early* the next *morning* reveals his urgency and distress regarding Daniel's fate. Darius's anxiety regarding what he had done to Daniel led to a restless night. Additionally, *the den* had been sealed with the royal signet and the signets of the other officials. No one would dare break the seal and save Daniel. The only way for Daniel to have survived the night with the *lions* would have been if God had intervened.

20. The king's address *to Daniel* revealed his deepening understanding of the one true God. The pagan gods, idols, and images of Babylon were lifeless. They were incapable of giving life to their worshippers. In contrast to these so-called gods, Darius recognized that the God of Daniel was *the living God*. Scripture uses this title regarding possible doubt (examples: Deuteronomy 5:26; 1 Samuel 17:26, 36; Isaiah 37:4; Matthew 16:16; John 5:26) or regarding God's provision (example: Psalm 84:2) and power (see Jeremiah 10:10). The people of Israel survived because the living God was in their midst and He made them His people. When the other nations trusted in their

idols, the Israelites could trust the living God, the Lord who was their help and their protection.

Daniel's faithfulness to God was evident. The presidents and princes acknowledged that Daniel was free from fault and was entirely trustworthy (see Daniel 3:4). He behaved as a *servant* of the living God by showing honor and respect as a servant of the king.

21. The king's advisors, direct reports, and even the queen wished for the king's good health and long life. However, this is the first and only time in the book that an Israelite greeted the *king* in this manner. Even though Daniel's situation came about because of the king's lack of insight, *Daniel* still greeted him with respect and honor.

22. Daniel first attributed his survival to the intervention of an *angel* from *God*. Angels are heavenly beings who serve God and follow His commands. Their ministry includes serving God's people, including protection. This angel miraculously *shut the lions' mouths*, though precisely how is unknown.

Second, Daniel noted that he survived because he was innocent before God and the *king*. Innocence does not mean that Daniel lived perfectly. Later, he confessed before God the ways that he had been a part of the sin of his people (Daniel 9:1-19). Instead, Daniel could claim innocence in this matter because he had followed God and was faithful to God's law.

23. The king's distress changed to joy and gladness upon seeing God's deliverance at work. Daniel escaped his ordeal without being *hurt* or wounded. Although God saved Daniel, Scripture is clear that faithfulness does not obligate God to save believers from death by martyrdom. For some believers, martyrdom is possible. Anyone who remains faithful to God in the midst of suffering has been promised

eternal rewards. Public displays of faithfulness will have a transforming influence on the community. This transformation can occur individually, such as how Darius became exceedingly *glad* for Daniel. However, it can also occur for a whole kingdom, as the following verses indicate.

26a. After hearing from Daniel and observing how God had saved him from the lions, Darius proceeded with two actions. First, he commanded that the officials who had accused Daniel face the same punishment they had intended for him. Second, Darius wrote a *decree* to "all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth" (Daniel 6:25). Such wide-reaching language suggested the scope of *every dominion* of the *kingdom*.

Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had decreed that no one speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:28-29). Darius's decree went further—it legislated that all people *fear* the *God of Daniel*. Coming from the mouth of a pagan king, this kind of fear could include being afraid of the consequences of God's righteousness or a respectful sense of worship to God.

26b. The decree provided several reasons why the king's subjects should fear Daniel's God. First, Daniel's God is *the living God*, and He alone can give life and sustenance to all who would receive it. Second, God's kingdom would never be destroyed and would never end. Earthly kingdoms, like the Babylonians', will end. However, God is the eternal king, and His kingdom will be eternal.

27. The decree also emphasized how God had done miraculous work for His people. God showed His power to His people by delivering and rescuing them. When God rescued His people, He frequently did so through miraculous *signs and wonders*. The way God *delivered Daniel* was no exception.

# Involvement Learning

## Faith in Times of Trouble

### Into the Lesson

What is one strong conviction you hold?

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What factors would prompt you to abandon that conviction, either temporarily or permanently?

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Today we'll look at a story about a faithful follower of God who would not renege on his convictions or his faithful habits, even though this refusal threatened his very life.

### Into the Word

#### Key Verse

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.  
—Daniel 6:22

Read Daniel 6:10-11, 14, 16, 19-23, 26-27. What is surprising about Daniel's reaction to the king's decree?

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What other choices might Daniel have made? How could these other decisions have been justified?

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How does Daniel's situation compare with that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

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How did the king feel about Daniel, and why?

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### Into Life

What is an obstacle, fear, or pressure that feels as strong as a lion in your life currently?

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How is that "lion" threatening your faith today?

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What encouragement do you receive from today's story to help you resist it?

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### Thought to Remember

Our faithfulness to God has personal and public implications.