



## A Night Among Lions

### Pilgrim Living in the 21st Century

Daniel 6

David Sunday

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I invite you to read Daniel 6 with me. Remember, these are the very words of our God. We'll begin in verse one:

*<sup>6:1</sup> It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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."*

*<sup>6</sup> Then these presidents and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.*

*<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. <sup>12</sup> 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."<sup>13</sup> 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."

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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."

<sup>16</sup> 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!" <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

<sup>19</sup> Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. <sup>20</sup> 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?" <sup>21</sup> Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup> 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." <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> 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.”*

*<sup>28</sup> So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

This is the Word of God.

I do not find myself in an art gallery very often, and I confess that even less often I find myself enjoying being in an art gallery. But there was one time when I found myself transfixed before this painting by the Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens. It's on display in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.



I remember standing there and I couldn't take my eyes off this picture as I considered how terrifying it must have been for Daniel to spend that night in the den of lions. Some of them look like they're sound asleep. That one over on the left has a really mean expression on its face. The one right by Daniel is roaring like he would really like to get a bite out of this prophet of God. And Daniel is praying, but he's not alone.

It's a great portrait. There's really only one problem with it. I'm not an art critic, but I would say Peter Paul Rubens didn't show Daniel's age appropriately in this picture. By this time in Daniel's life, he's an old man. He's in his 80s now. A lot of time has gone by. When I look at that guy, I don't see someone who is in his 80s. This looks like a much younger Daniel than he really is.

But even though he's in his 80s, the Daniel that we meet in chapter six is the same Daniel we met in chapter one—the Daniel who is faithful, the Daniel who refused the king's diet and instead said, "Give me vegetables," because he was trusting God to meet his needs. In chapter one, God showed that He is a God Who remembers and cares for His people.

This is the Daniel who spoke of the great statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream in Daniel 2, telling how that statue was going to be crushed by a heavenly rock that would expand and become a mountain that fills the whole earth. In that chapter we saw that God rescues His people, and His Kingdom will have no end.

Then in chapter three we saw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the friends of Daniel, thrown into a fiery furnace. They find that they're not alone there, but that the angel of the Lord is with them in that furnace. And the Lord God is saying to His people, I am right here with you. I am Immanuel, God with you.

We saw in chapter four that He is a God Who gives grace to the humble and restores those who repent of their pride, when Nebuchadnezzar experienced those seven seasons of insanity and acting like an animal, because he had not humbled himself before the Lord. But when he lifted his eyes to heaven, God restored him.

Then finally, last week in chapter five, we saw another king—Belshazzar—failing to learn the lesson that Nebuchadnezzar his forefather had learned, and there we saw that God is a God Who judges those who refuse to repent of their pride—a God Who says, “I will ultimately judge the unrepentant.”

Now we come to chapter six. Here's Daniel in his old age, at a time when it would have been easy for him to say, “I'm going to retire now. I'm going to coast to the finish line.” But God presents Daniel with his most demanding trial yet: he's thrown into a den of lions. What's the gospel message for us in this chapter? Very simply, two words: “Trust Me.”

Trust God. That's the message of God to His people from this unforgettable story. Trust in the Lord all your days. Don't stop earnestly trusting Him when you get into the middle of your race. We all know that the worst time in a marathon is in the middle, around mile 18 or 19. It's horrible. You want to quit. You feel weary. God says to us, my fellow mid-lifers, “Trust in the Lord now. Do not give up. Don't stop running. Don't think you can coast. Don't take it easy spiritually.”

And to those of you who are fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers in the faith, God says to you—as you look at Daniel, this aged prophet, so vibrant and full of faith and trust in the Lord at the end of his days—with every breath you take, God is saying to you, “Trust Me with all your heart. Live for Me all your days. Don't think that all your battles are behind you. Don't think that because you've had a few victories, now you can coast.”

No, God calls all of His people to fight to the finish, to run with endurance, to not give up. I love how the 1924 Scottish Olympian Eric Liddell described how he won the 400 meter race in the Olympics. You remember, if you saw the movie “Chariots of Fire,” that the 400 meter wasn't Liddell's race for which he had trained. He had trained for the 100 meter. But because that race was being run on the Lord's Day, Liddell said, “I cannot run on that day.” So they put him into the 400 meter race, and as he was about to run that race, an American Olympian handed him a note. That note simply quoted 1 Samuel 2: 30: *“Those who honor Me, I will honor...”* God says.

Liddell carried that note with him in that 400 meter race, and when he came to the finish line, he had set a world record time of 47.6 seconds, earning him the gold medal.

Afterwards he told the Edinburgh paper what his strategy was for winning that race. Here's what he said. "The secret of my success over the 400 meters is that I run the first 200 meters as fast as I can. Then, for the second 200 meters, with God's help, I run faster."

That's what God is calling all of us to do. For the first half of your life, child of God, He says, "Run as fast as you can. Give Me all you've got. Trust in Me with all your heart. Hold back nothing." Then for the second half of your life, God says, "Now trust Me more. Give Me more. With every breath you take, keep pressing on. Don't settle down." You might need to settle down physically, but not spiritually. Don't let your faith grow feeble and cold. Run to the finish. Trust in the Lord all your days.

That's how Daniel lived his life, and these things were written, God says, as examples to us, that we might imitate their faith, patience and perseverance. So Daniel's lessons for us are these:

- When should we trust in God?
- How should we demonstrate our trust in God?
- Why should we trust God with all our hearts and in all our ways?

These are what we are to learn from this unforgettable story of Scripture.

## **Lesson 1: When should we trust in God?**

I love how Bryan Chapell answers this question: "We should trust in God when it will cost you everything and when it will change nothing." Isn't that great? Isn't that encouraging? God says, "Trust Me when it will cost you everything. Trust Me even when it will change nothing in your circumstance."

What was at stake for Daniel in chapter six? His reputation. His respect. His position in the kingdom. His life. Everything was at stake for Daniel. The Babylonian administration he had been third in command of for one short night is over. Chapter five is done. There's a new administration run by a king named Darius.

If you've read any biblical theology about Daniel, you'll know that this is one of the biggest interpretive challenges in this book. Who is this Darius the Mede? Historical records don't tell us much about him, so a lot of ink has been spilled trying to figure out who Darius is. One plausible proposal is that Darius the Mede is the same guy as Cyrus the Persian. We know a lot about Cyrus from historical records.

So when we read at the end of Daniel 6, “*So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian,*” there could be a comma which would make it read like this: “So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” This was the Medo-Persian Empire, so it’s possible that the Medes called their ruler Darius and the Persians called him Cyrus. Some people think that’s a good explanation. If you’re not satisfied with that, you can stay up all night and read all kinds of scholarly articles and decide what you think. I’m not going to take any more time on that question.

But Darius is in charge now, and he sees very quickly that this Daniel is distinguished above all the other high officials, that he is someone who has an excellent spirit in him. So Darius appoints Daniel to be one of the three highest officials in the kingdom, as we read in verse two. All the other satraps have to give account to him. Daniel’s job is to make sure that nothing of the king’s suffers loss. He’s kind of like the watchdog of the kingdom, maybe like a comptroller who makes sure every penny is accounted for.

Because Daniel is so good at his duties, he provokes the ire of his colleagues. They get angry with him. Then verse three tells us the king is planning to set Daniel up as prime minister over the whole kingdom. All these Persian satraps say, “There’s no way we’re going to let an old man who’s a Jewish exile from Judea be our prime minister. That’s not going to happen.”

So they do what most people in politics do when they want to bring their opponent down: they do opposition research. They go through every recording they can find. They search his database. But there are no embarrassing conversations to be found. There are no mysteriously deleted emails. There are no pay-to-play scandals. Look at verse four: “*But they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.*” We live in a day when we are so jaded that corruption is like a synonym for politician. We just don’t expect to find high integrity among public servants anymore, do we? And it was no more common in Daniel’s day. It is rare for a public servant to be faultless, to be above reproach, to be blameless. So no fault could be found in Daniel—unless it’s something to do with the law of his God (verse five).

This really raises the bar for us, doesn’t it? People are watching. When your windows are up, They can hear what’s going on in your house if the volume reaches a certain pitch. They can see what your attitude is as you go through the cashier’s line in the store. They can observe your conduct toward your children, your spouse. They watch how you work. They’re looking at your life. I wonder if anyone who is watching us could say of us what they said of Daniel in verse five: “*We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.*”

This means that Daniel was not hiding his light under a bushel. He was letting it shine for all the world to see. It also means that they were convinced that Daniel was so committed to the law of his God that the only way they were going to bring him down was if they could get the king to pass a state law that would go against God's law. They were absolutely convinced that if Daniel was forced to make a choice between the law of his God and the law of the state—if it was one or the other—they had no doubt Daniel was going to go with God. That's how committed he was.

And they hated him for it. Not because of anything wrong in him. They hated him because he served a different King and he had an allegiance to a higher Kingdom. He was a righteous and blameless man—just like Jesus was hated by many in the world because of His love, integrity, righteousness and commitment. That's why Jesus says, "Don't be surprised if the world hates you" (John 15:18-19). They're not always going to hate us. Darius the Mede actually had respect for Daniel. But it didn't do Daniel a whole lot of good when it came to the lions' den.

Not everyone in the world is going to hate us, and not every time when the world hates us is it because we are so righteous. Sometimes when the world hates us, we deserve it. But in Daniel's case, as it should be in ours, it was because of his commitment to his God—and that alone—that there was such hostility. Are you ready to be hated for righteousness' sake? Will you keep trusting in your God, even if it costs you everything—even when it will change nothing?

You know, sometimes the reason we don't trust God is because we're wanting God to change something in our lives—something about our circumstances that we don't like. We pray, but nothing changes. Then we say, "I guess I can't trust Him, because He didn't change this part of my life." We want our circumstances to be different, and if God doesn't do what we want—what's comfortable for us—we say we won't trust Him. We sometimes ask, "What difference does it make, if we keep trusting in our God?"

The honest answer is that it might not make any difference—right now—in your circumstances. In fact, it might make your life more difficult if you commit yourself to following Jesus. At least right now. It's not going to be the case a hundred years from now, or a thousand years from now, or for eternity. There's an eternal difference if you trust in God. But right now, life might get harder. That was Daniel's experience.

You can just see them coming before this king. "Hey, King! We've got a great idea. Why don't you make a decree that no one can pray to any man or any god except you, King, for 30 days? How would you like to be Messiah for 30 days, King? How would you like to be the one mediator between God and men? They can only pray to you." When you think about what Paul says about Jesus—"There is one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5)—this proposal they're giving to Darius is really like they're saying, "Darius, would

you like to try out to be the Antichrist for 30 days?” Darius thinks, “Why not?” And he issues a decree that according to the law of the Medes and Persians cannot be revoked. And Daniel knows it.

Look at verse ten. He knows this decree has been issued. He knows the document has been signed. He knows the law cannot be changed. So what does Daniel do? Does he go before the palace of Darius with placards to stage a protest, because his rights are being taken away? Does he go running home in tears, complaining to all his friends, “I can’t believe what the government is doing to us now!” Does he say, “We need to write to our local satrap and demand our rights—the freedom of religion”?

No. He continues to do what he’s always done. He keeps trusting in God—even though it’s not going to change anything in the government, even though it could cost him everything, even though everyone in his circle of colleagues is conspiring against him, even though none of his Jewish friends seem to be rallying around him. Who knows—by the time Daniel is 80, many of his Jewish friends probably have already died. And here’s Daniel, alone—just being faithful, just trusting his God, even though it might cost him everything, even though it might not change circumstances. And he shows us how we are to do the same.

## **Lesson 2: How should we demonstrate our trust in God?**

The answer to this question is not by putting a bumper sticker on your car, or by parading your faith in public as if everyone should treat you special because of who you are. We demonstrate our trust in God by getting down on our knees. We demonstrate our trust in God by living a life of prayer—faithful, consistent, habitual, dependent prayer. Verse ten, *“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.”*

It’s a good thing Daniel didn’t call for a board meeting to deliberate about what he should do under these new circumstances. Because I can imagine there would have been some very creative proposals offered, such as, “Daniel, would it really hurt you if you just took a 30-day break from prayer? After all, you’ve prayed more in a month than most people pray in a lifetime. Haven’t you prayed enough? Surely you’re not going to fall apart if you just take it easy for a little while until this edict from the king expires. What’s a month without prayer?”

You ask many believers, and they’d say, “Well, I don’t know. I’ve survived a month without prayer.” Not Daniel. I’m glad he didn’t have the board meeting, because someone might have said, “Daniel, couldn’t you pray silently? After all, God will hear you whether you speak or

are silent. And why not close those windows? Why do you have to face Jerusalem? What's that all about? I mean, we know why you're doing that, Daniel. We know that you're following the pattern that King Solomon established in 1 King 8:48-50, when he prayed at the dedication of the temple. We know, Daniel, that you're inspired by how King Solomon said these very words in his prayer:

*“God, if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their enemies, who carried them captive, and pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you...and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive.*”

“Daniel, we know that you're following biblical precedent when you open that window and face Jerusalem, looking toward that temple where sacrifices are offered for God's people. We know you are praying that God's people would repent and that God would have mercy and return His repentant people to the Promised Land. We know that's what you're doing, Daniel, and we really appreciate it. We're really grateful for your faithful prayer ministry on our behalf.

“But Daniel, this is a special circumstance. Can't you just contextualize a little bit? Can't you drop the part about praying toward Jerusalem, toward the temple? Can't you just kind of turn off the light, shut the windows, crawl under your covers and pray where no one will see you? Because Daniel, you're our spiritual leader and we don't want to lose you to a den of lions. Daniel, can't you compromise?”

Daniel doesn't even waste his time with that kind of thinking. He doesn't do a cost-benefit analysis. His mind is made up. His pattern is established. His habits are in place. His disciplines of grace are giving him life. Daniel says, “I would rather die than stop praying. I'd rather be eaten by lions than be distant from my God. I'd rather stop breathing than stop interceding.”

Prayer is to Daniel just what it should be to every one of us who believes. Prayer is the Christian's vital breath. It is his native air. Prayer is his watchword at the gates of death. “We enter heaven by prayer,” an old hymn says. That's what it is to Daniel. Prayer is his oxygen. Prayer is his life. The remarkable thing is not that Daniel was driven to his knees by a crisis, as we often are. The remarkable thing is that Daniel was not taken off of his knees by this crisis, that he would not stop praying as he had always done simply because the crisis came.

What an example. Think about it in our own lives. What does it take to get you to stop praying? How many of us are as disciplined and consistent in our prayer lives as Daniel was in his? Many of us would have to confess that we don't pray when we have perfect freedom to do so.

One way of thinking about it is this: what if the government said, "We're going to put a den of lions in every church building"? Right back there, in the green room. You'll have to walk past the den of lions if you want to come to prayer meeting on Wednesday night. How many of you think attendance would go up? I highly doubt it. I think attendance would go way down.

So maybe we need to pray more, so that we'll be ready when we are presented with this kind of challenge, so that we will not give up—even if the government comes breathing down our necks, as they did in Daniel's day. If we don't pray when we're free, what makes us think we'll pray when someone's telling us not to—or we'll die?

For Daniel to not pray now would be to destroy his testimony, his witness. So he keeps at it and he experiences what William Cowper said: "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." I see the enemies of God's people, as they're threatened by this praying man. They're like a nasty army of demons, reporting back to Darius—the devil—gleefully announcing the results of their espionage. "He doesn't honor you, Darius. And you made a decree that cannot be revoked. It's out of your hands. There's nothing you can do."

Darius is not happy about this, because he respects Daniel. Verse 14 says, "*He labored till the sun went down to rescue him.*" He's getting all the lawyers together. He's saying, "Is there any loophole? Is there any way I can save Daniel?" Darius can't save Daniel. Put not your trust in princes. Do not trust in earthly kings, in earthly rulers who cannot save you. Do not put your hope in a new administration, because it will be just like Belshazzar's. Kings and presidents and rulers cannot save or deliver.

But Darius knows Who can—maybe. So as he puts Daniel into that den of lions, look at what he does in verse 16. Darius declares to Daniel, "*May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!*" And then the stone was set and sealed, and Daniel found himself spending a night among the lions!

Friends, when should you trust in God? When it might cost you everything. When it might not change anything. How should you trust in God? By consistent, disciplined, earnest prayer, by faithfully carrying on with your daily walk without compromising your faithfulness or your integrity before God—no matter what everyone around you is demanding from you. That's how you trust Him.

### **Lesson 3: Why should we trust in God?**

The last question is: why should we trust God and keep trusting Him, even when it costs so much? One way to answer this question would be to consider who had the more restful night when Daniel was in the lions' den. Darius or Daniel? I would have thought that Darius would go home and sleep like a Persian king. But no. Look at verse 18: *"Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him."* He's in anguish all night long. He can't sleep. He can't wait for the sun to rise over the horizon so he can go to the den of lions and see if maybe Daniel's alive. Maybe! He's in fear of Daniel's God.

Verse 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?"*

The first three words of verse 21 are astounding: *"Then Daniel said..."* Ah! He's alive! How did that happen? Here's a man with wisdom, an excellent spirit, who's been treated unjustly, who's been falsely tried by his conspirators, who's been thrown into a den of lions—a tomb so to speak—with a stone that's been sealed. And now he's alive!

Does that remind you of another story in the Bible? Now, hear from the den of lions. From behind the sealed stone, a voice speaks. God's servant lives. I love the first words out of Daniel's mouth in verse 21: *"Oh king, live forever!"* "I'm not mad at you. Yeah, you threw me to the lions, but I still love you, King. Life forever. I'm here to be a blessing in your kingdom—as we should be in our world."

Then he gives his testimony in verse 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."* So the king wasn't the only one fasting that night. There's a den full of lions, and every one of them was observing the king's fast along with him. The lions fasted. Who had a better night's sleep? Darius or Daniel? I love how Iain Duguid describes it:

It is clear that, contrary to all expectations, Daniel actually spent a far more comfortable night in the stinking pit than Darius did in his royal luxury. We may almost imagine the prophet leaning back on a warm, fuzzy lion, conversing for hours with the angel about heavenly things—until he was rudely interrupted by Darius' question. His fearsome lodging turned out to be a den of angels

rather than a den of lions. The angels shut the mouths of lions and kept God's servant safe.

(Iain Duguid, Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia)

Wow! Look at verse 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."* Why? *"Because he had trusted in his God."*

And so we should trust in our God at all times. Why? Not because He keeps us from entering into trouble, but because He rescues and sanctifies us through our troubles. That's why we trust Him. Not because He makes our lives comfortable or easy, but because He never leaves us nor forsakes us in our discomfort and burdens. Because He promises in Psalm 34:7-8, *"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!"*

So we should trust in the Lord at all times when it costs us everything, when it seems to change nothing, because He's a God Who can do anything. He's a God Who saves. Salvation belongs to the Lord. We see this as we see Daniel coming out of that den of lions. We also see that salvation is a miracle. Notice what happens when those who conspired against him are thrown into that den of lions and come under the judgment they deserve for their sin. It wasn't because the lions weren't hungry that night that Daniel did not get eaten. It's because God was giving Daniel a taste of the Kingdom that is to come, when the lion will lay down with the lamb, when all will be at peace and creation will be restored, because the King has come and His glory will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

We see Daniel coming out of that den. We see Jesus coming out of His tomb, victorious over all, reigning over death itself. And we say, with Darius, *"He is the living God enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end."* "God, You deliver and rescue. You work signs and wonders in heaven and on earth. You have saved Daniel from the power of the lions. You will save us too—and so we trust in You."

Let's stand together and pray.

O great God of highest heaven, we pray that You would subdue and conquer everything within us that resists You. Lord, forgive us for being so lackadaisical with our faith and our commitment to You, when we see what it might cost and what it has cost servants of old. We're reminded that right now, this very day, there are brothers and sisters around the world who are undergoing terrible persecution and torture, yet they will not stop trusting You, because they know You are the God Who rescues. You are the God Who saves. You are the God Who is worthy of all our trust.

So Lord, forgive us for being fainthearted. Forgive us for our love of this world and the things of this world. Help us, Lord, to start seeking Christ more earnestly as the greatest treasure, the pearl of great price. Help us seek Your Kingdom and righteousness first, for You will give us everything else we need. We trust You for this, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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