



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 and the Lion’s Den”

This is the 7th sermon in a topical series entitled,
Misused Stories of the Bible

*Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. Thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. 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. Help us to see Your grace in his story and have our **faith** renewed and strengthened as a result. Help us to see our own need of Your grace this morning. Help us to know You more through **Daniel**, chapter six. And so we pray, **have mercy on us** this morning, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, **help us see Jesus**, for in His name we pray, amen and amen.*

INTRODUCTION: Dare to be a _____

This past week a few pastor friends and I got into a humorous online debate about some of the hymns in The Trinity Hymnal. I like the newer version of “**Rock of Ages**”, and they didn’t. I’m not a fan of “**El Shaddai**”, but a few of them are. But there was one hymn we all agreed on. We were **unanimous** that putting this hymn in the hymnal was a **colossal** mistake. And, you wonder, just what was this gross error of hymnody? **Hymn # 579** — “**Dare to Be a Daniel!**”

Let me regale you with these stirring lyrics ...

*Standing by a purpose true,
Heeding God’s command,
Honor them, the faithful few,
All hail to **Daniel’s** band!*

*Dare to be a **Daniel!***
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!

Excuse me while I throw up. And if the hymn wasn't so annoying, I have now seen enough "***Dare to be a Daniel!***" sermons to last the rest of my life. These messages are exhorting us to have **more** courage, **more** faith, **more** prayer, **more** discipline, **more** conviction, **more** this, **more** that ... as if it all depends on you doing more. Most of these messages are rich in **moralism** and light on the gospel. I saw one on how **Daniel** is the model of how to be a better politician, another on **Daniel** as the model of faithful worship, and even one on how to silence the lions in your life. My **least favorite** was the one where the story of **Daniel** and the lion's den was used to ask the question, "Have you really given God a chance to prove Himself to you?" As if creation and the cross weren't enough.

Now, to be fair, most of those things aren't bad in and of themselves, however, this passage is **not** about how we should emulate **Daniel**. Rather it's about the God who instills courage, grants faith, and answers prayer.

When our world is falling apart ... **is our God still sovereign?**

When the job is lost, when the relationship fails, when the grades are bad, when the dangers are real ... **is our God still sovereign?**

When I was writing this, I came to a new appreciation of Dr. Paul Tripp's devotional with the tongue-in-cheek title of "***Dare to be a Darius.***" He writes, "**many things in your life are out of your control.** We live in a world filled with injustice, oppression, corruption, disaster, disease, and various other kinds of trouble. Many of us have experienced loss, tragedy, and suffering because of the condition of our fallen world. As I've traveled around the global church, I've found that all this trouble has gotten Christians discouraged. Much of our emotional energy is sapped by worry. Many of us are motivated by fear. I understand why – life in a fallen world is hard. We experience things every day that were never meant to happen when God designed His perfect created order. But I also have come to understand this: when we assess the trouble in our lives, **many of us forget to calculate the existence, character, and plan of God.** We take into account the size of the difficulty, and we take into account the effect it has on our lives, but we struggle to take into account ... **God.** We simply **forget** that He is present, ruling, and loving, and perhaps we simply need to remember more.

As we come to the end of what is Act One in **The Book of Daniel** (chapters 1-6 which describe **Daniel's** life), it's helpful to review the key images or events that play a pivotal role in piecing together the gospel message of Daniel.

In chapter one, Daniel and his friends were kept healthy on a dangerous diet of vegetable soup, as God communicated to His people, "***I remember you.***"

In chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar's statue was displaced by a heavenly Rock, as God assures His people, "***I will rescue you.***"

In chapter three, one "***like a son of the gods***" appears with **Daniel's** friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the fiery furnace to demonstrate God's principle, "***I am with you.***"

In chapter four, Nebuchadnezzar's restoration from animal-like insanity communicates God's message to his own idolatrous people, "***I exalt the humble.***"

In an important but gracious contrast, **chapter five** reveals the writing on the wall that

humbles Belshazzar and discloses God's loving warning of judgment to all people in all times, ***“I humble the exalted.”***

Those messages are all wrapped up in **chapter six**, ***“I remember you ... I will rescue you ... I am with you ... I exalt the humble, and I humble the exalted.”*** And I love how it ends in **Daniel 6:26-27**. **Darius**, not **Daniel**, delivers one of the great statements on God, ***“He is the living God, enduring forever; His kingdom shall never be destroyed, and His dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues, He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth.”***

So how did we get from **Daniel** as the model ... to **Darius** as the model? It wasn't easy. After all, **Daniel** already knew that God was sovereign even over the most fearsome dangers that roamed the earth. As a result he's able to experience a profound peace in the midst of his trials and tribulations, as if life was going along rather smoothly. And so, if we want to experience a profound peace, and if we're going to be able to trust that everything **actually will** work out for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose, 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 look first at ...

v. 1-5: THE PILGRIM LIFE OF DANIEL ¹

The first thing we see is that **Daniel** has learned how to live as a pilgrim. From the beginning, 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 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. Nebuchadnezzar has been replaced by Belshazzar who's been replaced by **Darius**, but **Daniel kept serving**. And, according to our text, **Daniel** served the empire so well he kept getting promoted. Now he was one of the key leaders in the whole empire, starting at **verse 1**, ***“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***

1 The Exposition of the text is adapted from my sermon, ***“Daniel in the Lion's Den”*** preached here at Potomac Hills on 3/22/09. **And the books**, ***Daniel: Reformed Expository Commentary*** by Dr. Ian Duguid, pages 90-104; ***The Preacher's Commentary: Daniel*** by Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, pages 115-131; ***Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Daniel*** by Dr. Daniel Akin, pages 68-78; ***ESV Study Bible***, Daniel study notes by Dr. Duguid and Dr. Paul Wegner. The outline is adapted from ***“Daniel”*** in ***The Bible Knowledge Commentary*** by Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost, pages 1347-1349. **And the sermons**, ***“The Lions of God”*** by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 5/21/20, The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive, ***Logos Bible Software 8.17***; ***“Daniel in the Lion's Den”*** by Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, III, Chancellor, Reformed Theological Seminary, preached when Senior Minister at First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Jackson, MS, 1/18/98, www.fpcjackson.org; and ***“The Song of a Broom”*** by Dr. Bryan Chapell, PCA Stated Clerk Pro Tem and Pastor Emeritus, Grace Presbyterian Church, Peoria, IL, www.preachingtoday.com.

against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”

Even while he served this foreign empire, he was never shaped by its values. Corruption is a major concern in our world today, but it seems it was even more common 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 this administration, just as in **all** previous administrations, who 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 because they’re jealous of his success. Others turned on 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 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, and we try to highlight that several times a year. In November, we’ll be posting a daily prayer focused on the persecuted church. 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. And yet, as I read the Bible, it seems that **suffering** 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.

Pilgrims remember these things. Pilgrims understand the world is not our home, and therefore, we shouldn’t be surprised if things don’t 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 people are out to get him. And that sets up the trial that’s at the heart of this passage — which is seen in ...

v. 6-9, 12-16: THE PERSECUTED LIFE OF DANIEL

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. ... 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!”**

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 back in **Daniel** 3.

The rejection of Christians by the world is to a great degree unavoidable. Take a look at what happens here with **Daniel**. He’s is a perfect example of what we all know. That is, for centuries, there’s been always great tension between people inside and outside the church. And yet, the explanations, of both the insiders and of the outsiders, tend to be simplistic and self-serving. Very often, Christians will say, “Well, the reason why there’s this tension is simply because we’re being persecuted. We’re like **Daniel**. We’re good, and the world doesn’t like the fact that we’re good.” Truth be told, we’re not nearly as good as we think we are. Most Christians aren’t like **Daniel**. Most Christians aren’t anywhere near that consistent. Hence all the **Do More** sermons.

At the same time, people outside the church have their own explanation, and it often goes like, “Christians tend to be hypocrites. They’re narrow-minded. They put people down. They oppress people. That’s why there’s so much tension between those inside and those outside the church.” While the vast majority of Christians aren’t **Daniel’s** ... they aren’t charlatans either. In fact, we have to be very careful. In today’s culture, there’s a myth that when you think of Christianity, you think of old white men with a lot of power who are putting everybody else down. In reality, the majority of Christians today are in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and in

emerging economies. The fact is ... the vast majority of Christians have **never** been the people in power, have **never** been the people at the top.

So, in our text, this is actually a very unusual situation. **Daniel does have** the power; **Daniel is at** the top. According to **verse 2**, **Daniel** is one of three *presidents*, right below the king himself. I don't think the others are going after him because he's such a high-character guy. I think they're jealous that he has the power, and they don't. If they can get rid of him, then they'll get the power. It's the same power politics of every other capitol on the planet. The only difference is that when they go to dig up dirt on **Daniel**, they can't find any. They attack his faith because they can't find anything else to attack. So they pass a law that you can only pray to the king. The motive is obvious because it's only a 30-day law. Once **Daniel's** out of the way, they won't need the law anymore.

Now the king eventually 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 two verses we skipped over, which are about ...

v. 10-11: THE PRAYER LIFE OF DANIEL ²

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.*"

Now there's a number of different ways 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 does what he's always done. Three times a day, it's 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.*"

Now, if he didn't start praying three times a day until he was 10, that's just a guess, and he's now about 85, then **Daniel** had prayed three times a day for 75 years. I asked, "How many times would **Daniel** have prayed if he prayed three times a day for 75 years?" I did the math, and the answer comes out to over 82,000 prayers. No wonder he simply went back to his room and started praying. A 75-year-old habit is hard to break. He wasn't about to stop praying just because some plotting princes threatened his life. After all, he's now around 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 prayers to God. He did it knowing that his adversaries would probably catch him.

What I find remarkable 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 to pray. And the text doesn't tell us that he cried out to God about injustice, but it says he "*gave thanks before his God, as he had*

² A small part of this section is adapted from a good sermon with a terrible title, "How to Tame Lions" by Dr. Ray Pritchard, Keep Believing Ministries, preached when Pastor of Calvary Memorial Church, Oak Park, IL, 1/23/20, www.keepbelieving.com.

done previously.” He’s facing imminent death, knowing that his enemies will see him and use his prayers against him, and yet, **Daniel**’s on his knees, giving thanks. And sure enough, the plotters come and find him praying, *“as he had done previously.”* Since **Daniel** prayed this way somewhat openly 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 closed the mouths of the lions, so that **Daniel** could pray without hindrance. But His purpose was not to save **Daniel** from trials ... but rather, to save **Daniel** through trials. There are lessons here that **Daniel** and all those around him needed to learn, lessons that **could only be learned** 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. 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 side. 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.”*

Let’s step back here and contrast the two main characters — **Daniel** and **Darius**. Here’s **Daniel**, calm, continuing in his pattern of prayer, and here’s the king of the greatest empire on earth, agonizing over what he can do. It’s a picture of the power that a man who is weak, but **strong in Christ** has ... versus the weakness of a man who is strong in the world, but **weak in the things of God**. It’s a total contrast. The mighty monarch is, **verse 14**, *‘distressed,’* but **Daniel**, knowing he may be facing death, remains calm, composed, faithful to the Lord. It’s the difference between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of our Lord.

However, ironically, **the agonizing helplessness** that he felt resulted in ...

v. 17-28: A CHANGED LIFE FOR DARIUS

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.”*

Here’s the irony in contrasting the experience of **Darius** and **Daniel**. **Darius** returns to his palace, where he spends a sleepless and anxious 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 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 lions’ den than the king did, even though **Darius** was surrounded by luxury. He has every pleasure that ancient world had to offer, yet he couldn’t enjoy any of them, while **Daniel** had nothing but 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 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.*” It was a terrible end. Their gods were unable to deliver them from the lions, whereas Daniel’s God had delivered him.

In the end, what we see is that the heavenly court was the only one whose decision really mattered. **The Most High God** holds the ultimate power of life and death, not some earthly king. And in telling the king of his 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 another lesson out there. And we learn this from the lips of **Darius** himself, who understands what has happened, and it results in the king giving what amounts to a profession of faith. **Darius**, 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 earth. In response to **Daniel’s** deliverance, **Darius** issues a counter decree 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**.

As He did with Nebuchadnezzar in chapters 3 and 4, as He did with Belshazzar in chapter 5, God now does with **Darius**. The Lord has brought the rulers of the mightiest of empires to acknowledge **His greatness** and **His power**, as well as the fact that **His is the only kingdom that would really 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 most of **Daniel’s** life was spent in exile. 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**, 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** teaches 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 never will be. Therefore, in the midst of our greatest suffering, even in persecution, we can have a peace that astounds the world, for the Lord holds both us and our oppressors in His hand.

However, 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** gives us **more** than a **model** of how to deal with suffering, more than 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** is a **foreshadowing** 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: *Foreshadowing of a Finished Work*³

Daniel endured the test of the lions' den, emerging safely 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**.

In **verse 17**, there is a very interesting statement, "*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.*" Here, the king's signet ring, and the signet rings of his lords, are used to **seal** the stone that is placed over the lion's den. Of course, this passage bears an uncanny resemblance to **Matthew 27:65-66**, where we read, "*Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.'*"⁶⁶ *So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.*"

Like Daniel was **sealed** in the Lion's den, so Christ was **sealed** in the tomb, and this was the ruler's way to **seal** the fate of these servants of God. And in both cases, that **sealing** led to greater glory for God, when He brought **Daniel** up out of the den and He raised Christ up out of the tomb.

Like Daniel, Jesus was falsely accused by His enemies, **Mark 14:55**, "*Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none.*"

Like Daniel, Jesus was 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.

Daniel clearly **foreshadows** Christ. But Jesus is much greater than Daniel. God saved

³ A small part of this section is adapted from Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons by Dr. Sidney Greidanus, pages 173–200.

Daniel from certain death, but God raised Jesus after He **actually** died. You see, 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 alone and abandoned, suffering the fate 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. Psalm 22, which Jesus quoted from on the cross, also says, **Psalm 22:19, 21**, "*But You, O LORD, do not be far off! O You my help, come quickly to my aid! ... ²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!*" It's not surprising that the early Church saw in the story of **Daniel in the lion's den**, a **foreshadowing** of the resurrection of the Lord, for as **Daniel** was brought out of a den that had been **sealed** by those in power, so was the Lord Jesus Christ raised from a tomb which had been **sealed** by those in power.

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 some sort of super believers like we make **Daniel** out to be. Most of us are ordinary sinners, people who constantly cave 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 Jesus Christ, the true and better Daniel**.

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're amazed at the grace You showed to **Daniel** ... and to **Darius**. One was Yours ... and one wasn't ... yet You called them both to the truth. We're not nearly so amazed at the grace You've shown to us. It's because we know we're not better than **Daniel** ... but we think we're better than **Darius**. And yet we come before You as people of little faith and less prayer. But here You are, showing grace to the undeserving. Lord thank You that no one is beyond Your grace ... not even **Darius**, not even us. Thank You that on that first Easter morning the **seal** was broken, the tomb was empty, Christ was raised, and He comes forth as the head of a mighty company of redeemed people. Build us up in such a way that we live according to that*

faith we profess as part of that redeemed people. Enable us to recognize the evil around us and remind us that one day You'll be sending Jesus back to make all things right. Come quickly, Lord Jesus, we pray, in the Name of Him who claims us as His own and clothes us in His own righteousness, Jesus Christ, who lives, and reigns, and is coming again. Amen

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Please be in prayer this Wednesday afternoon as I officiate the burial service for Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Dent Goodson, father of D.B. Goodson, at Arlington National Cemetery. Dan Goodson, or Pop as he was known, died last May due to complications arising from 84 years of good living.

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.