

(PP) Daniel chapter 6 is the one I think of first when I think of the book of Daniel

- It's the chapter in which we talk about Daniel and the lion's den

Now chapter 6 is very similar to chapter 3

- Back then Daniel's friends were thrown into the fiery furnace during the Babylonian reign under the order of King Nebuchadnezzar
- And this time Daniel himself will be thrown into the lion's den during the Persian reign under the order of King Darius

As we have followed Daniel's life he is now about 85 years old

- But whether you observe him as a youth or you observe him as senior adult the story of his life is that of a faithful man

One writer I read this week compared Daniel's life to that of former baseball pitcher Don Sutton

- Many of us remember him as being the announcer for the Atlanta Braves for many years
- But what distinguishes his career the most was his consistency

He pitched for 21 seasons, through six presidential terms and four trades

- But he consistently did what pitchers are paid to do: and that was win.

When asked to comment on his own career he said: "I am a grinder and a mechanic. I never considered myself flamboyant or exceptional. But all my life I've found a way to get the job done."

Daniel was that sort of consistent, faithful man of God

- Whenever he was called upon he was there

But what makes the life of Daniel stand apart was that his entire life was lived going from one trial to another

- He only had to spend one night in the lion's den
- But he had to spend an entire lifetime in the palace of pagan kings

His testimony is that of remaining faithful through the toughest of times

- Through the darkest of trials and temptations
- Even while suffering greatly

*So what was it that got him through all those trials?*

It was not his great strength, his will power or his intelligence...

It was his faith in God...

- His knowledge of who God was
- His understanding that God was sovereign over world events and that He cared for Daniel too

So don't just look to Daniel today as a man to imitate

- If you do that you'll miss the power in this

You have to look to Daniel's God, the One True God of the Bible

- The One who cared for His prophet and saw him through his trials
- And have faith in God to see you through your trials as well

As we've been doing every week as we're making our way through Daniel

- We'll first go through the chapter and understand what is happening in the text
- Then we'll go back and make application to our lives

### **Let's begin reading verses 1-3**

Now a satrap was a sort of provincial ruler, someone who was probably in charge of things like security and tax collecting

- The presidents were then over them and were responsible for seeing that all the money flowed in to the king's treasury

Even though a new king and a new empire were now in control

- Daniel remained in a position of influence in the new administration

To understand how significant that is

- Imagine if after the transition from President Bush to President Obama
- That President Obama decided to keep Carl Rove as his closest associate

I know the political situations are completely different

- But Daniel had proven himself so faithful that even the new king wanted him to remain in his position

We're going to talk about this more later when we seek to apply this passage

- *But is that how you are looked at by those around you?*
- *Is that how you are looked at at work and in the church?*
- *A faithful person? A godly person?*

I pray that you are so unbiased, so fair, so honest, so wise, so faithful

- That people want you around them
- They want you on their team

I hope that's the type of people we are becoming by God's grace

- That He is helping us die to self and live for Christ
- Growing in Him
- Growing in sanctification every day
- Growing in faithfulness

That's the kind of man Daniel was

- But not everyone in this new administration loved Daniel...
- This is what it says in verse 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.**

Some may have been jealous of his rise to prominence

- Some may have been worried that his impeccable character would prevent them from stealing or taking advantage of the new king

I don't know how many people came against Daniel but it had to be a good number

- There were only three presidents counting Daniel and this says the other two were involved in the plot against him
- It also says that several of the satraps beneath him attacked him

But with all these people digging for dirt and looking for some flaw in Daniel's character

- Not a single charge could be found against him

*Wouldn't it be nice if it were said of you that no-one could find ground for complaint or fault?*

We knew a man in Argentina who was a student in the seminary when we lived in the capital city

- He was baptized in the church Randy and Karen worked in
- His name was Dario Garcia

He was studying in the seminary during the week and on the weekend he worked as a professional soccer referee

In one of his matches a controversial call came up and an ungodly and unscrupulous Team President attacked Dario

- He tried to say that he was taking money to throw the game

But as soon as people heard that the Team President was attacking Dario

- Everyone dismissed the accusations immediately
- To a man, they all said, *I know Dario, I know his character, and I know he is incapable of doing anything like that*

A little while later Dario was rewarded for his faithful job by being selected to represent Argentina in the World Cup in Germany

- His officiating team refereed more games than anyone else in history in one World Cup and he was allowed to call the opening and final game

That's what happens when you guard your testimony...

- You won't even have to utter a word in your defense
- Other people around you will defend you

So these ungodly presidents and satraps realized they couldn't find a fault in Daniel

- And they decided the only thing they could do was attack his faith

Verse 5 says: **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."**

So this is what they do

- They go in to the new king Darius, acting all reverential and well-intentioned
- And they ask the king to sign an edict, a non-revocable ordinance requiring everyone in the kingdom to pray only to the king for 30 days
- Anyone who prays to anyone else will be thrown into the lion's den

Verse 7 describes how these men approached the king with their plan

**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.**

You've run into people like these before...

They are flatterers, insincere, sweet talkers, laying it on thick

- Bootlickers
- Those are the clean words I can use...

But the flattery of these men swayed the king and got its desired result

- Verse 9 says: **Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.**

Now what takes place next defines the story...

When Daniel learned about the decree, he knew he was facing a serious dilemma.

- If he failed to show that his first loyalty belonged to the new Persian government, he would be executed by being fed to the lions.
- On the other hand, if he compromised his commitment to the LORD by ceasing to pray, he would risk displeasing the LORD

Verse 10 says: **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.**

I think these words... **as he had done previously...** are significant

Daniel didn't do anything out of the ordinary when he opened the windows

- He just kept doing what he had been doing for years even though this new decree was passed

Followers of God in his day prayed three days a day facing Jerusalem

- That was the scenario Solomon described in his prayer at the dedication of the temple

So Daniel chose to just keep doing what he had always done

- He was going to remain faithful in prayer

Now he could have gone right on praying in private

- But I think he saw that as a compromise to his integrity and faithfulness
- He chose not to change his behavior or hide it

Now before we continue I want to stop and address something here that I thought about a lot this week

- Especially after Nicolay was here with us last Sunday talking about sharing the Gospel with Muslims in Eurasia
- And as Hans and Brandy are here today, back from a year in Egypt

*Are we supposed to take Daniel chapter 6 as a pattern for missions strategy today?*

- *Is this saying that if God calls you to a Muslim or hostile nation you should go in on day one and pray and preach publically like Daniel?*

Let me be very clear

- I would not recommend that unless God clearly leads you that this is His will for you because the possibility of immediate death is great

When we prayed about where to go in missions we sensed God leading us to an open country just because I love to preach and be open in sharing the Gospel

- Other people are gifted by God to be able to work in closed countries

The point is that there is a difference between being a missionary and moving into a closed or hostile nation

- And living in a nation where prayer **had** been allowed until a new law prohibits it
- *Understand?*

Daniel had always been allowed to pray before so the point is that he was not going to stop now that a new law was passed

If laws are passed in our nation ordering us not to pray as we have always done

- We will need to reject those laws too...

I'll speak more about that later but I need to move along or we'll never finish

They see Daniel praying and they go back to the king as tattletales

They were already sweet-talkers and now they are tattle-telling sweet-talkers...

*Don't you hate it when people act that way?*

You can hear their syrupy talk in verse 12 as it says: **Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, "O king! Did you not sign an injunction...?"**

However instead of getting mad at Daniel, the king is distressed at this news

- He knows what a faithful man Daniel has been
- He also knows now that these other presidents and satraps have been dishonest, manipulating, conniving and flatterers

But these other men were smart in the trap they set for Daniel

- They knew the laws of the land and so they reminded the king that the decree he had signed was irrevocable, unchangeable
- The new king wouldn't dare change it and appear weak

So the men were smart in laying their trap

- They had tricked a man, even a king; but they could not outwit God

When the king saw that he could not free Daniel and keep face he gave the order for Daniel to be thrown into the lion's den

- It was sealed with a stone and marked with a seal by the king's own hand

Verse 16 shows us how upset the king was by what happened: **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!"**

Verse 18 says: **Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.**

At this point I wish we could all go back in time to witness what happens next

- Even though most of us probably know what happens
- Don't lose the wonder in what God does here...

King Darius was wondering what was going to happen

- I think he wondered if God was going to once again spare the life of Daniel and provide for him in a miraculous way

**Let's read verses 19-23 as the king goes back to check on Daniel early the next morning**

God sent an angel and shut the mouths of the lions

- He protected His prophet

It's interesting, but the king had a horrible night's rest while Daniel apparently had a peaceful one seeing the angel there to protect him

- Daniel enjoyed fellowship with God even while in the lion's den

So King Darius takes Daniel out of the lion's den and punishes the other presidents and satraps responsible for the decree in the first place

The lions were pretty hungry by now and so the text says that before they even reached the bottom of the lion's den they were overpowered and broken into pieces

The chapter ends with Darius making another decree

- This time a much more wise one
- **Let's read beginning in verse 25 to close out the chapter (25-28)**

Once again, this chapter ends with God moving and working in awesome and miraculous ways on behalf of His people

- He is doing those things that only He can do

*So what are some of the things we can take away from chapter 6?*

There are a lot of different approaches we could take but I am choosing three ways to apply this

- I feel very strongly about this first point of application

**First, you need to know that if you are trusting in God and following Him, you may be called on to suffer**

He may call on you to suffer and He may not

- But He is God and if you are obeying Him and following Him He can use you anywhere, doing anything, for any length of time

In looking at Daniel's life you could argue both that he suffered terribly and that he was greatly blessed

- On the one hand you could talk about him having to leave his homeland at the age of 15 and being held in captivity for 70 years
- But on the other hand you could speak of how God gave him favor in the eyes of all the different kings

I say all that because God may have you in a tough situation right now or God may have you in a great situation right now

- But if you are trusting in God and following Him, He has the right to place you anywhere, doing anything, for any length of time

- It could even be that the very center of God's will for you will involve suffering

If you don't believe me, look at Joseph who spent years in the Egyptian prison

- Look at Job who lost his fortune and family
- Look at John the Baptist who was beheaded
- Look at Jesus who was crucified
- Look at Paul and the troubles and hardships he endured as a missionary

I'm starting out with this subject because we need a radical reorienting of what it means to be a follower of God

- Being a Christian does not mean that you will be problem free and that all of your life will be spent in comfort
- Many times means the center of God's will for His people involves suffering and hardship

You see, I think many of us have bought into the same health, wealth and prosperity lie that we so often point out in the televangelists

Sometimes in the church in America we get so caught up in the mindset of:

- *Am I happy, are my kids happy, am I financially secure?*
- That we miss the bigger purpose God has for our lives

In fact, the way we make decisions in the church in America many times is this:

- *What will make me happy, my kids happy, and bless me financially?*
- But when we do that we miss out on what God is doing in our lives...

Don't tell me when Daniel was a young teenager and he was thinking about how he wanted his life to go

- That he dreamed about being taken into captivity for 70 years
- But that's what the center of God's will was for him
- God had him there as His spokesman, His prophet
- It involved hardship and suffering

You see, it's easy to talk about how God is sovereign and God is in control when He has us up here

- *But can we talk that same talk if He has us down here?*

What I'm trying to say is that if we are obedient to God

- He may call us to go places and do things that might not be at the top of our list of favorite things to do
- But if we want to be obedient to Him we have to do them

We talk a lot about trusting in God

- In fact, we sing a song that says: *Wherever He leads I'll go...*

But if we were honest we'd sing it this way...

- *Wherever Lord... except on the mission field ...*
- *Anywhere Father... as long as it is in Greenville County...*
- *I'll do anything God... as long as I make more money there...*
- *Count me in Jesus... as long as I'm more comfortable...*

With billions of lost people all over the world I struggle believing that God wants all of us here in America with churches on every corner

- I actually struggled with God in moving back to America
- I still question God from time to time as to why I'm here
- But He has made it clear to me that for now, this is what He has for me
- But I'm willing to go anywhere, for any amount of time, to do anything He says, even if it means suffering

If you are trusting in God and following Him, you may be called on to suffer for God

- So don't run from it
- Don't buy the lie that says if you're suffering you're outside the will of God
- Instead, trust in Him... follow Him... obey Him...

**Now second, a second thing Daniel 6 teaches us is that there will be times that laws are passed that go against your Christian faith**

Back in Daniel's day a law was passed taking away religious freedom

- But don't be surprised if in our lifetime laws will be passed that seek to take away our religious freedoms
- The day will come when we can't run from suffering any longer
- He'll bring it to all of us

Already in our nation we have laws that go against our Christian faith

- Abortion is one such law that I think of immediately
- Abortion is legal but that does not make it morally right

So don't be surprised if in our lifetime more laws go against our Biblical faith

When that happens we have to follow the example of Daniel

We'll have to remember what it says in Acts 5:29: **But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."**

God's Law is a higher Law than man's law

- So if there is ever a contradiction in the two, we side with God

Corrie ten Boom broke the law of Germany when she hid Jews from the Nazis during World War II

- But she would have broken a higher law had she not tried to prevent the murder of innocents.

As the world becomes more and more secular and sinful, you will find yourself taking stands that are unpopular and that may even violate the law of the land.

As Daniel goes on to speak of the antichrist and the end times we may have more opportunities to explore this subject further but that's all I'll say for today

- Just be prepared that there will be times that laws are passed that go against your Christian faith

**Now third and finally, Daniel is ultimately a story of God... God's sovereignty, God's salvation, God's providence and God's deliverance**

When I think of Daniel I think of how in control God is

- He appoints kings and He takes them down

I also think of how God provides for and protects His people

- He's done it in the fiery furnace and now the lion's den

But God has not changed

- God is still sovereign, He still saves, He still provides, He still delivers...
- He is in control of the fiery furnaces and the lion's dens in your life

I've heard it said that God has one hand of the thermostat and the other on the timer

- He keeps the mouths of the lion's sealed

He is with you through the trials of life

- Through the trials of sickness and death
- Through the trials of hardship at home and work

God is good and God is for you

- God is faithful and God is in control

You see, the real hero in this story is not Daniel, but God

Daniel is a great man of faith and worthy of imitation

- ***But the hero of Daniel is the hero of the Bible and it is God***

Let me show you just one more thing as we close...

- It's found in verse 17
- I want to end with this
- Daniel 6:17: **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.**

There's something about rolling a stone over the lion's den that reminds me of them rolling a stone over the tomb of Jesus

I know the situations are different

- In Daniel a live man was kept alive by the power of God
- And with Jesus, a dead man was brought alive by the power of God
- But in both those cases God did it and God gets the glory

God provides for His people

- He saves us through the death of Christ at the cross and His resurrection

God is sovereign, God saves, God provides, God delivers

- It's who He is
- It's who He is for you

Won't you come to Him today and trust in Him?

- Come to Him, repenting of your sins and placing your faith in Him
- Come to Him, trusting Him, following Him as Lord
- Let's pray...