

The God of Daniel

One of the great spiritual crises in the church today is the confusion about the issue of saving faith. We tend to use the word “faith” very generically, as in, “I have faith that everything will turn out okay.” Or, “You just need to have faith in yourself.” Or, “It doesn’t matter to what religion you subscribe, as long as you have faith.” The Bible, however, describes saving faith as a specific belief in the saving plan of God through Jesus Christ and, furthermore, this same faith is not a mere assent to the assertions of the Bible but rather a personal trust in Jesus Christ; that is, saving faith means we have given our lives over to Him.

Daniel 6 is a beautiful illustration of genuine saving faith.

Daniel 6

¹ It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three high officials, 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 high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ Then the high officials 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 against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”

⁶ Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, “O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the high officials 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.

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. 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 declared² to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!” 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.

Let’s make three important observations about the text.

I. Your faith will always be tested. (vs. 1-9)

A. In surprising times (vs. 1-3)

Daniel was now probably around 85 years of age; he had successfully navigated many moral and spiritual challenges; he was universally recognized as a noble, trustworthy leader; and Israel, after 70 years in exile, was now on the verge of being able to return to Jerusalem. It is now — near the end of Daniel’s distinguishable career — that his life’s greatest test comes.

B. By sinister people (vs. 4-9)

The plot of these fellow officials is almost unthinkably wicked. Through lying and political intrigue, they manipulated Darius into an ungodly decree.

Why does God allow this? In I Peter 1:6, 7 we see two key reasons: 1) your faith is precious, and through trials God actually strengthens your faith, and 2) at the coming of Jesus Christ, He will receive high praise from His persecuted people who will celebrate His appearance.

II. Your faith will sustain you through all your trials. (vs. 10-18)

A. Your faith leads you to prayer. (vs. 10, 11)

Faith always leads us to prayer. Daniel had a habit of frequent prayer, and the threats of his rivals would not deter him. He would rather die. Notice that he “gave thanks” (v. 10) to the Lord in addition to his “petition and plea.” (v. 11)

B. Your faith leads you to peace. (vs. 12-19)

Just as Paul teaches in Philippians 4:6, 7, when we pray instead of worrying, God gives us His peace that passes understanding. Darius was the one who was worried and disturbed. (vs. 14-18).

III. Your faith will lead you to triumph. (vs. 19-28)

John says in his first epistle that our faith “has overcome the world” (I John 5:4), because “he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (I John 4:4) All the powers of this world were arrayed against Daniel. The stone was placed across the mouth of the den and sealed with the king’s signet. This reminds us of Jesus’ burial when the chief priests and Pharisees urged Pilate to secure

the tomb so that none could steal His body and later claim that He was resurrected. Pilate said, "Make it as secure as you can." (Matthew 27:65) This was, however, a futile command, because "God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it." (Acts 2:24)

So it is with God's people! Our faith is in the living God, and "He is not God of the dead, but of the living." (Matthew 22:32) Since Christ has been raised, so shall we be! Daniel provides the picture of faith's outcome: delivered from our enemies, delivered from death, delivered from guilt, delivered from shame.

The greatest result of our faith is the proclamation of the glory of God. Notice that Darius now issues a second decree (v. 26) that reverses the previous irreversible decree! He now decrees the supremacy of Yahweh (vs. 26, 27), because Yahweh taught Darius that Darius is not Yahweh! So it will be when we, too, are delivered from the one who "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8) This is the outcome of our faith.

As you examine yourself, you must ask "Do I really have this saving faith — a faith that rests upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation, a faith that endures all trials, a faith that triumphs over death itself? This is the most important question for every human being to answer.

Discussion Questions

1. Share an example of how a trial in your life strengthened your faith. How do you think Daniel's faith was strengthened by his trial in Chapter 6?
2. What do you find most admirable about Daniel's prayer life, as revealed in Daniel 6:10,11? Why do you think he was unwilling to arrest his prayer life for 30 days in order to avoid a conflict with Darius?
3. What is wrong with "the law of the Medes and Persians"? (vs. 8, 12, 15)
4. What is our normal reaction when we have been dealt an injustice? How does our typical reaction differ from Daniel's?
5. How does our salvation glorify God?