

The Showdown

Daniel 6:16-28

Introduction

Today we will continue our study of Daniel chapter 6 that we began in our last discussion. However, this lesson is illustrated best in Psalm 71:12-19. Let us read these verses.

O God, do not be far from me; O my God, hasten to my help!

Let those who are adversaries of my soul be ashamed and consumed; let them be covered with reproach and dishonor, who seek to injure me.

But as for me, I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more.

My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and of Your salvation all day long; for I do not know the sum of them.

I will come with the mighty deeds of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, Yours alone.

O God, You have taught me from my youth, and I still declare Your wondrous deeds.

And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come.

For Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the heavens, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?

Review of the Setting

We will complete the balance of Daniel chapter 6 today. However, let us begin with a brief review.

Daniel, as you may remember, has been an enemy of the princes and the astrologers and the rulers of the kingdom. As we have gone through this study of the book of Daniel, we can almost feel the hatred building. We can almost feel the tension as it grows, until finally, like Elijah on Mount Carmel, there is a showdown. It is finally, one man against many; the godly against the unrighteous. We will find, in the last part of Daniel chapter 6, that this will take place in a most unusual way.

I want to point out, in this chapter, a phrase that will repeat itself time and time again; in fact, eight times. As I was reading this passage, this phrase seemed to jump out. It is the phrase, “his God,” or “my God,” or “the God of Daniel”. We see this phrase in Daniel chapter 6:

- verse 5 – “his God”;
- verse 10 – “his God”;
- verse 11 – “his God”;
- verse 16 – “your God”;
- verse 20 – “your God”;
- verse 22 – “my God”;
- verse 23 – “his God”;
- verse 26 – “the God of Daniel”.

There is a theme running through this chapter and even through Daniel’s life. It is that his God is real; his God is alive. We have seen it manifested over and over again, and our study today will not be an exception.

I think, though, if Daniel were living in this century, we would probably consider him to be some type of religious fanatic. He is a man who takes time out from his job to go somewhere and pray. In fact, he prays three times a day. He has been removed from Jerusalem, he has been removed from the scriptures for almost 80 years, and yet, he continually prays to his God. Every chance he gets, he is preaching; every chance he gets, he is pointing his employer to the Most High God. I think most of us would pull Daniel aside and say, “Relax just a little bit. What are you trying to do, change Babylon?”

I believe Daniel would reply, “Yes, I am.”

I want to apply his life to ours today. I will give principles from each point through this chapter.

Let me give one more point before we begin in verse 16 of Daniel chapter 6. As we have been studying the life of Daniel, it seems that the trials have gotten more and more difficult. However, it has been a tremendous encouragement to me to discover, in Daniel’s life, that at the age of 13, he did not face the lions. At the age of 13, he had to make a decision, “Will I eat and drink the king’s meat and his wine?”

To us this did not seem a very momentous decision. To him, it was great.

Later, Daniel would have to approach the king and drum up all the courage he had to tell the king that he was about to die.

Then, finally, we find Daniel in this climatic trial of facing the lions, not as a 13 year old, but as a 90 year old.

I want to encourage you that wherever you are in your life, God has hand picked the difficulties; hand picked the trials. He knows what you can take; He knows what kind of strain you can bear.

Daniel was ready for the lions at the age of 90.

The King's Anxiety

Let us begin with Daniel 6:16.

Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you."

Obviously Daniel's testimony was no secret. We could rephrase these words, "Your God whom you constantly serve, must deliver you." This contains an imperative; a note of pathos, as the king basically says, "Daniel, I have tried everything I can. I have worked from sun up to sun down. I have tried to find a loophole in this law of the Medes and the Persians, some way to get around it, and I can't find it. So your God has to be the One to deliver you."

Notice the king's anxiety, as we read further, in Daniel 6:17-18.

A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.

Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.

This story, in Daniel chapter 6, is as much about Darius as it is about Daniel. This is an ungodly king who has rubbed shoulders for several years with this man. Finally, Daniel is thrown to the lions because his enemies were so jealous of his position. They knew Daniel was about to be promoted, so they came up with this scheme. However, Darius is observing and it is fascinating that Daniel never vindicates his

cause; Daniel never gives five reasons why the king should let him live. I think, as we move through this passage, we will see something happen to the king, as well as to Daniel.

Now, humanly speaking, Darius had a reason to fear. I did a short study this week on the subject of lions and lions' dens that confirmed his fear.

In that day, a lions' den was literally carved out of stone below ground level. It would be an open cavern and down the middle of this cavern would be a wall. In the wall at the ground level would be a small gate or door that the keeper could raise or lower from the top. The keeper would throw food into one section, open the door and get the lions to go into that section, and then shut the door so he could go in and clean the other section. When people were thrown in, they used a side door that was for this purpose. They would deposit the people there and then the keeper would go up to safety and raise the gate for the lions to come in.

I looked up "lions" in the encyclopedia, and although I am sure we have all seen lions, the information was fascinating. The average male lion weighs around 500 pounds, stands about three and a half feet high, and is more than 10 feet long. The lions' den or cavern probably had about 10 to 15 lions in it, so we can imagine the fear involved in Daniel's life.

I think we have the idea that Daniel was thrown into the den and then, he kind of stuffed his hands in the pockets of his gown and walked among the lions whistling, "There is Within My Heart a Melody," or something like that. We think that he had everything completely under control. This is absolutely not the case.

As far as Daniel knew, he was about to become a meal; his life was about to end. I think when Daniel was shoved through that den door and stood there watching the keeper go up to the top and hearing the gate opening behind him, he probably breathed what he thought would be his last prayer. I imagine Daniel stood there afraid to breathe.

When was the last time you had a frightening experience? Have you ever been practically scared to death? I am sure we could all tell stories, but since I have the floor, I will tell mine. I do not mean, however, to compare this story to Daniel's situation.

A couple of months ago, I was lying in bed about midnight. Suddenly, I heard a loud crash in the

kitchen and a lot of commotion. I thought, “Oh my stars, someone has broken into the house.”

I sat up in bed – my eyes must have been as big as saucers. I thought, “Maybe I ought to wake Marsha up and have her go check!”

It is better to die a hero than a coward, however, so I got out of the bed and crept to the door. We have a long hallway that leads from our bedroom straight to the dining room beside the kitchen. I kind of peeked my head out the door. I am a real brave guy! I had the thought to yell, “Hey, man, I’ve got a 38.” I did not do it though, because the guy could call my bluff and say, “I’ve got a sawed off shotgun.” I thought it would be best to just keep quiet.

I looked down the hall and could see the light that Marsha leaves on over the kitchen sink. I do not know why she does that – perhaps to let burglars know which window is available! However, it was casting a shadow into the dining room and I could see a figure; I could see something in the middle of the kitchen floor.

My heart was going, “Ka-boom, ka-boom.” I was so scared. I began to think, “Now what should I do?”

There was only one thing to do – go find out. That is what you would do, right? I had to either do that or send my wife, so I headed down the hallway. I balled up my fist and thought, “Well, I’ll make one good swing as I swing my way into heaven.”

I came around that kitchen doorway, where the refrigerator stands, and as I walked closer I could just see it – it was motionless, as if it was kneeling, and it was only about three and a half feet tall. I kind of sprung around the refrigerator, ready to swing.

Now, you are not going to like this because all that was there was a sack of trash that had fallen off the counter onto the kitchen floor! Can you believe that?! However, I was so psyched up that I wrestled that thing to the ground and threw it out of the house!

Now my story had a happy ending, but as we come to this story today, we get the idea that Daniel had everything under control. I imagine, from his vantage point however, as he was standing there almost afraid to take a breath of air, all he heard, as the gate was raised, was the patting of soft feet and the sound of heavy breathing. Perhaps he felt the brush of a lion against his leg and then, a cold nose as it sniffed at his hands and his feet. I do not know when it happened, but Daniel evidently saw an angel come down and bind the jaws of the lions, perhaps

with some invisible cord. After that, he breathed his first breath.

Notice, in Daniel 6:18, the king went to his palace and would not allow any entertainment; any music. It is fascinating to think that Daniel, in the den, had a better night’s rest than the king in the palace.

Continue to Daniel 6:19.

Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions’ den.

Let me stop at this point to give a principle about the life of this king and the other leaders as they viewed Daniel’s testimony.

Principle: The world is looking for reality in your faith.

Underline, in fact, the phrase, in Daniel 6:16, . . . ***“Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.”***

We need to understand that wherever we are, there are people watching. We may have no idea they are watching.

I wonder if Daniel even knew that the king was observing his life. He might have been a little shocked when the king said, “Daniel, it’s up to your God – He’s the only one that can save you,” and then, that the king watched for his response. However, as I mentioned, there was no vindication; no defense; no response at all from Daniel.

I think there should be a different response in our lives when we go to the emergency room. I really believe that we should respond a little differently in a funeral procession. I do not mean to say that there will be no tears or sorrow or fear, but in the final analysis, there should be a difference.

The world is looking for reality in your faith, whether it is on the campus, at the company, in the home, in the neighborhood, or wherever it might be. The world needs to see a difference.

Note what happens next, in Daniel 6:20.

When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

Daniel’s Assurance

Notice Daniel’s assurance, beginning in Daniel 6:21.

Then Daniel spoke to the king, “O king, live forever!”

“Get me out of here!”

No, Daniel does not say this. In fact, it is fascinating that Daniel decides, while there in the middle of all the lions, to just have a conversation with the king. Look at Daniel 6:22-23.

“My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.”

Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Notice the last phrase, “. . . because he had trusted in his God.”

Let me give a principle to remember.

Principle: When miracles occur in your life, give God the credit.

When something supernatural happens, whatever it might be, if God uses you in some way, small or great, give Him the credit.

Daniel could have said, “O king, no problem down here. I’ve got it all under control. You see, I’m God’s man.”

Daniel neither said this nor was it a possibility. He simply said, “King,” as he was looking at him at the mouth of the cavern and probably pointing heavenward, “My God shut the lions’ mouths.”

Give God the credit.

The Schemers’ Annihilation

Now, let us notice the schemers’ annihilation, in Daniel 6:24.

The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions’ den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

Now it was the practice among the Persians, when punishing someone who was guilty of a crime, to not only kill the criminal, but to kill their wife and all of their children, as well. The point of this being, in their

minds, that this would not allow some wife or child to then seek revenge. They would wipe out the entire family.

Notice, however, although we will not take the time to look at this in detail, that in the Mosaic Law, it was against the law to take the entire family and commit capital punishment – only the criminal was punished. There were, I believe, two occasions in the Old Testament in which the entire family was killed. We can assume that they were all involved in the plot.

We do not know what part the families had in this situation with Daniel, but the king destroyed the entire family line. Notice that Daniel 6:24 told us the lions broke all of their bones before they even hit the ground.

Do you know what the scholars, the critics say about this chapter? They say the lions did not eat Daniel because they were not hungry. If that is the case, then sometime between midnight and dawn, they worked up quite an appetite. Before these people ever hit the ground, it is as if the lions leapt at them, grabbed them in mid-air, and crushed them.

Talk about vindication – this was it! Let me give another principle.

Principle: When treated unfairly, allow God to vindicate your cause.

We have previously studied the life of Nehemiah and now, the life of Daniel. It is interesting that neither of those two men *ever* vindicated their cause. They always left it up to God.

God said,

. . . Vengeance is Mine, I will repay . . .
(Romans 12:19b)

In other words, God says, “You let *Me* take care of it.”

Are you being treated unfairly? Is there some kind of scheme against your character? Are things not going the right way for you and it seems as if justice is being denied and unrighteousness is being upheld?

You can leave the vindication to your God. He may not do it as dramatically as He did in Daniel chapter 6, although you may want Him to; you may wish that He would take the lions after the people, and He may not do it when you want Him to, but ultimately, the vindication belongs to Him.

These men and their families were killed.

The King’s Announcement

Notice the king's announcement, in Daniel 6:25.

Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound!"

These kings loved to write edicts, did they not? Continue to Daniel 6:26a.

I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; . . .

Before we read the remainder of this passage, let me give a principle.

Principle: God can use your lions' den experience to reveal His character.

Whatever situation we may be in; whatever difficulty we may have, God can use it to ultimately reveal His character.

Notice what Darius learned, as he says, in Daniel 6:26b-27,

. . . for He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and His dominion will be forever.

He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

Do you know what Darius learned? He learned something of the character of God because this man, Daniel, responded well.

Do not underestimate the power of a godly life. Wherever your life, your salt, your light is shining, never underestimate what God can do with your life.

I do not think Daniel ever thought that simply praying, as he did three times a day, would result in this event. I really believe Daniel expected to gain the martyr's crown. We can only speculate, but I think Daniel thought his life would end.

However, God turned it around, revealed His character to the masses, perhaps even bringing the king to become a worshiper of God. *Never* underestimate the power of your life, when you live it in a godly manner.

Now you may think, "Daniel had it made. For Daniel, everything always turned out right. It seemed that everything was always perfect for him. Think of it, with every king that came along, he was given the

first promotion. I think he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth."

Do not make this mistake. Daniel was never allowed to return to Jerusalem. As we learned in our last discussion, when Daniel prayed, he prayed with his window open to the east, praying toward the city, as God commanded. I think Daniel's heart was broken.

Daniel wanted to return to Jerusalem more than you could *ever* imagine. This was a trial that God *never* took away. As long as Daniel lived, he *always* lived in captivity. He was *always* in the minority. He was *always* in the wrong. He was *always* alone. This particular trial, God *never* ended. Daniel *never* returned to Jerusalem. He would *always* live in the courts of pagan kings and ungodly subjects.

However, we can take great encouragement from this man. Even though God did not remove Daniel from the trials, God kept him *in* the trials.

Even though God may not take you away from a particular situation; even though you are going to remain godly in an ungodly surrounding, God will keep you in this situation. God has designed us to be light and salt in a very dark and a very dry land. Be assured, He will keep you in this particular trial.