

THE KING OF KINGS

DANIEL 6

# OUR KING CLOSES LIONS' MOUTHS



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**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

*Dare to be a Daniel*

*Dare to stand alone*

*Dare to have a purpose firm*

*Dare to make it known*

Is that what Daniel's all about? Daring courage? Is that the message of Daniel? Is that why Daniel was written? To challenge us to be courageous? What is Daniel about? Specifically, what is the lion's den about? Is it about being inspired to be more courageous by Daniel's courage? **What is Daniel's message to us?**

## BACKGROUND

**Theme of Daniel:** The King of kings is still King.

**Structure of Daniel:**

- Faithful Living in Hostile Times (1-6)
- Forward Looking in Hostile Times (7-12)

**The story so far:**

- Be faithful because our King Cares for us (Daniel 1)
- Be faithful because our King Communicates with us (Daniel 2:1-30)
- Be faithful because our King Conquers for us (Daniel 2:31-49)
- Be faithful because our King Commands us (Daniel 3)
- Be faithful because our King Condemns the Proud (Daniel 4:1-33)
- Be faithful because our King Converts the Lost (Daniel 4:34-37)
- Be faithful because our King Calculates Spiritual Weight (Daniel 5)
- Be faithful because our King Closes Lions Mouths (Daniel 6)



What is Daniel's message to us?



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# 1. EVIL IS POWERFUL (1-9)

## A Good Use of Power (1-3)

In God's providence, Daniel was promoted again by the third King he served under in Babylon, King Darius. Not many politicians stay in office for seventy years with their reputation intact. After serving as one of three deputy Prime Ministers, Darius recognized Daniel's superior honesty and dignity, and made plans to make him Prime Minister over the whole kingdom. Darius saw that "an excellent spirit was in him" (3). Even Darius knew there was something mysteriously different about Daniel.

## An Abuse of Power (4-9)

Daniel's success provoked the jealousy of the other politicians, and instead of trying to rise to his standards, they tried to bring Daniel down to theirs. They dug deep for dirt on him, scoured government files, carried out security checks, but couldn't find a thing (4). Realizing that their only hope was to make a new law that criminalized the worship of God, they invented a law against praying to anyone but the King, upon pain of death, and got unthinking Darius to sign it (5-9).

## CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

**The world recognizes virtue.** They may not have been able to explain it, but the King and some other advisors recognized that Daniel had an 'excellent spirit,' that no one else had. It's hard to define what that is, but we know it when we see it, don't we?

**The world hates virtue.** The world will recognize, admire, and promote virtue until it stands in their way, until it crosses their path, until it stops their enrichment or advancement. However irrational and self-defeating, people will hate Christians that are only out for their good. Behind this irrational hatred is the devil, going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). The devil was at work in the king's palace long before the lions' pit.

PEOPLE RECOGNIZE GOODNESS  
AND RESENT GOODNESS.



I'm scared by the power of evil.  
Is there any greater power?



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## 2. FAITH IS MORE POWERFUL (10-17)

### Faith is Tested (10)

As Daniel went home after hearing this new law, what must have been going through his head? "It's only a ban on prayer, not Bible reading or worship. It's only for thirty days, and then I can go back to praying again. I can do so much good in my current position. I'll keep praying but just make sure no one sees or hears me." Whatever spiritual warfare he was fighting, faith won, because as soon as he got home, he did exactly what he did every other day. He opened his window and prayed to God out loud. His faith overcame the world (1 John 5:4)

### Faith is Trouble (11-16)

When Daniel prayed, his enemies pounced. They reminded the king of his law and its punishment, and got him to agree to enforcing it before then reporting Daniel's flagrant disregard. **He pays no attention to you, O king...but makes his petition three times a day** (13). Despite trying desperately to escape the corner he had painted himself into, Darius eventually caved and ordered Daniel thrown into the lion's den

### Faith is Triumphant (16-17)

We hear nothing from Daniel between the time he prayed and the time he was cast into the den of lions. But we get an insight into the calm confident faith of Daniel from Darius's words, **"May God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!"** (16). It was evident that Daniel was engaged in God's service and entrusting himself into God's hands. It was a beautiful triumph of faith.

## CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

**Faithfulness in private is as important as faithfulness in public.** Daniel's faith was as tested in his living room as in the lion's den.

**Continuous service is a consistent witness.** Although Daniel was serving King Darius faithfully, Darius saw that Daniel was actually serving God continually. This made a huge impact on Darius as his later words confirm (20).

FAITH IS GREATER THAN FEAR



What about when our faith doesn't feel powerful?  
Faith only has power as it looks to God's power.



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## 3. GOD IS MOST POWERFUL (18-28)

### Darius Hopes in God's Power (18-20)

One commentator entitled this passage, 'The night the lions were fasting.' It was also the night the king was fasting. He couldn't sleep, didn't eat, and turned off all entertainment. Darius's words the following morning indicate that he was praying to Daniel's God. As soon as the sun rose, he ran to the lion's den and as **he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish..."O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"** (20; John 16:33)

### Darius Hears of God's Power (21-23)

What a relief when Daniel's voice came from the den of lions. **"O king, live forever! 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). He bears no ill-will to the king, honors him with his opening greeting, and then points all who will hear to the God who protected his body and preserved his integrity.

The king was overjoyed, and when Daniel was removed from the den, everyone was stunned because not only was he alive, he was unmarked. Why? **"Because he had trusted in his God"** (23). Daniel enjoyed the presence of God while Darius tossed and turned in his pleasure filled palace

"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, FURRY LION, CONVERSING FOR HOURS WITH THE ANGEL ABOUT HEAVENLY THINGS, UNTIL HE WAS SO RUDELY INTERRUPTED BY DARIUS'S QUESTION. HIS FEARSOME LODGING TURNED OUT TO BE A DEN OF ANGELS RATHER THAN A DEN OF LIONS: THE ANGEL SHUT THE MOUTHS OF THE LIONS AND KEPT GOD'S SERVANT SAFE" (IAIN DUGUID)

### Darius Honors God's Power (24)

Darius honored God's power with his joy over Daniel's safety, his words of praise God's deliverance, and his execution of those who had so viciously opposed God's servant. The same lions who didn't open their mouths all night now devoured the plotters and their families before their bodies even reached the bottom of the pit. Just like the previous confessions of Nebuchadnezzar (2:47; 3:28-29; 4:34-37), Darius confessed God's greatness and power.



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# CHANGE YOUR STORY WITH GOD'S STORY

## Daniel pictures Christ

- Like Daniel, Jesus was opposed, persecuted, and unjustly accused by those who were jealous of his power.
- Like Daniel, Jesus exercised faith in the face of the lion and refused to cave into temptation.
- Like Daniel, Jesus was sentenced to certain death but was resurrected three days later to the joy of his people.
- Like Daniel, an angel was sent to comfort Jesus in the desert, in the garden, and in the grave.
- Like Daniel, Jesus's faith and faithfulness will be rewarded with harmony between the most vicious of animals and humanity (Isa. 11:6-7).
- Like Daniel, Lord Jesus will be the source and cause of the doom of unbelievers.

## Daniel points to Christ

- God's Angel closed the lions mouths (22). Many commentators believe that the Angel of the Lord in the lions' den is the Lord's Old Testament messenger, the Son of God. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah was more powerful than the lions of Babylon. Daniel is one of the most perfect fulfillments of Psalm 34:4-10.
- Daniel trusted in God (23). He didn't run from the lions, fight the lions, or tame the lions. He trusted in his God. On the basis of this lion-taming faith, Daniel was inducted into the Hebrews 11 Hall of Faith, being numbered among those who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions (Hebrews 11:33). As he looked the lions in the face, he was looking to God's face.

Daniel's message is not "be fearless but be faith-ful," meaning, "Be full of faith in Christ."

DANIEL DOESN'T SAY "LOOK AT MY COURAGE"  
HE SAYS, "LOOK TO CHRIST"



Hear God's story > Change your story > Tell the story



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# CONCLUSION



**PRAYER:** Great God of Daniel, give us Daniel's faith that pictures Christ and points us to Christ, all for Christ's glory. Amen

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Before this sermon, what did you think the book of Daniel was all about?
2. From your own life experience give examples of good uses of power and abuses of power.
3. How would you know if someone had "an excellent spirit" like Daniel?
4. What other occasions did the Angel of the Lord intervene in the Old Testament?
5. What's the connection between faith and courage and how do they relate?

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