

Faithful No Matter What
(Even When Life Seems Unfair)
(Daniel 6)
Pastor Chris Momose

INTRO

“I’m trying to live a good life and be a good person, so why has this happened to me?”
How many of you have felt this way at one time or another, or maybe even right now?
Probably everyone here has felt this way at one time or another, whether we are Christians or not.
And if you’re a Christian, maybe you’ve thought this:

“I’m trying to honor God in my daily life, so why has He allowed something like this to happen to me?”

No one is exempt from life’s harsh realities, no matter how faithful he or she may be to God.

This is made very clear in the Old Testament book of Daniel.

Some stories in the book of Daniel are well known because they are taught in Sunday School.

Most of you probably know about the three faithful Jews who were thrown into a blazing furnace and about Daniel in the lion’s den.

In chapter three, we read about Daniel’s three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

They were faithful, godly young men who worked hard and honestly for their king,

but they were rewarded for their faithfulness to God by being thrown into a blazing furnace because they refused to bow before the golden image of himself that the king had set up.

You may remember their famous words to the king when given one more chance to bow before his golden image:



“OUR GOD, WHOM WE SERVE, IS ABLE TO DELIVER US FROM THE FURNACE OF BLAZING FIRE; AND HE WILL DELIVER US OUT OF YOUR HAND, O KING. BUT EVEN IF HE DOES NOT, ... WE ARE NOT GOING TO SERVE YOUR GODS OR WORSHIP THE GOLDEN IMAGE THAT YOU HAVE SET UP.”

The king became furious when they said this and had them thrown into the blazing furnace, but the Lord honored their faith and willingness to die for their faith rather than commit idolatry by appearing in the furnace with them and protecting them from the flames.

In chapter 6 of Daniel, we will see that he was treated in a similar way for his faithfulness to God.

The story of Daniel being thrown into a den of hungry lions is just as famous as the story of the Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, I think.

Both of these stories make it very clear that God is with us in the midst of our trials, losses, grief and pain.

And He can and will bring good of some sort out of what appears, at this time, to have nothing good at all in it.

I BACKGROUND OF DANIEL’S TRIAL

If you have your Bible with you, please open up to Daniel 6, verses 1 through 3, and follow along as we see what happened in faithful Daniel’s life.

By this time in his life, Daniel is now in his eighties.

He has lived over 65 years serving the various kings of Babylon with integrity while serving God with faithfulness.

Darius is now ruler of the empire, and Daniel is serving him as he served Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar —
as a faithful, high-level government official.

 ¹ IT SEEMED GOOD TO DARIUS TO APPOINT 120 SATRAPS OVER THE KING-DOM, THAT THEY WOULD BE IN CHARGE OF THE WHOLE KINGDOM, ² AND OVER THEM THREE COMMISSIONERS (OF WHOM DANIEL WAS ONE), THAT THESE SATRAPS MIGHT BE ACCOUNTABLE TO THEM, AND THAT THE KING MIGHT NOT SUFFER LOSS.

 THEN THIS DANIEL BEGAN DISTINGUISHING HIMSELF AMONG THE COMMISSIONERS AND SATRAPS BECAUSE HE POSSESSED AN EXTRAORDINARY SPIRIT, AND THE KING PLANNED TO APPOINT HIM OVER THE ENTIRE KINGDOM.

It becomes very clear early in Darius' reign that Daniel is a much better administrator than any of the other commissioners and satraps.

The Bible describes him as having an extraordinary spirit, which is probably referring to his wisdom, honesty, and work ethic.

And because of this, the king plans to make him the number two ruler in the entire kingdom.

We see here how a life lived for the glory and honor of God is a life of excellence.

And in the darkness of this pagan empire, Daniel's life shines bright and strong as a testimony to his God.

II DANIEL IS TRAPPED BY HIS ENEMIES

A. THE OTHER COMMISSIONERS ARE JEALOUS OF DANIEL

Verse 4,

 ⁴ THEN THE COMMISSIONERS AND SATRAPS BEGAN TRYING TO FIND A GROUND OF ACCUSATION AGAINST DANIEL IN REGARD TO GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS; BUT THEY COULD FIND NO GROUND OF ACCUSATION OR EVIDENCE OF CORRUPTION, INASMUCH AS HE WAS FAITHFUL, AND NO NEGLIGENCE OR CORRUPTION WAS TO BE FOUND IN HIM.

The other administrators are jealous of Daniel when they learn that Darius intends to promote him. It doesn't take much imagination to figure that they knew they would never be able to use their positions of power for their own personal gain as long as someone like Daniel was watching over them.

But there was nothing they can accuse Daniel of —

he is completely faithful to the king, and he is neither negligent nor corrupt.

B. SO THEY PLOT AGAINST DANIEL

But in verse 5 we see that they find something they can use against Daniel.

 ⁵ THEN THESE MEN SAID, "WE WILL NOT FIND ANY GROUND OF ACCUSATION AGAINST THIS DANIEL UNLESS WE FIND IT AGAINST HIM WITH REGARD TO THE LAW OF HIS GOD."

The only thing they can find to use against Daniel is his faithfulness to his God!

What sets Daniel apart is that he honors God in his daily life, and it makes him stand out from those who don't.

What would happen if someone scrutinized **our** work life, **our** family life, **our** finances, **our** relationships, and what we look at on the Internet?

Would they say of us, “He is committed to honoring God in all he does,” or “She desires to please God in all she does”?

It’s something to think about, isn’t it.

So the first principle we see in this chapter is this:

★ THOSE WHO HONOR GOD WILL SHINE FOR GOD AND BRING HIM GLORY.

★ Philippians 2:15 tells us that we should “BE BLAMELESS AND INNOCENT, CHILDREN OF GOD WITHOUT BLEMISH IN THE MIDST OF A CROOKED AND TWISTED GENERATION, AMONG WHOM YOU SHINE AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD.”

Those who honor God in their daily lives, are going to stand out in the sinful, dark world in which we live.

And Daniel’s life showed this to be true.

Back to our story.

The Bible says that these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows:

★ ⁶ “KING DARIUS, LIVE FOREVER! ⁷ ALL THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE KINGDOM, THE PREFECTS AND THE SATRAPS, THE HIGH OFFICIALS AND THE GOVERNORS HAVE CONSULTED TOGETHER THAT THE KING SHOULD ESTABLISH A STATUTE AND ENFORCE AN INJUNCTION THAT ANYONE WHO MAKES A PETITION TO ANY GOD OR MAN BESIDES YOU, O KING, FOR THIRTY DAYS, SHALL BE CAST INTO THE LIONS’ DEN.

★ ⁸ NOW, O KING, ESTABLISH THE INJUNCTION AND SIGN THE DOCUMENT SO THAT IT MAY NOT BE CHANGED, ACCORDING TO THE LAW OF THE MEDES AND PERSIANS, WHICH MAY NOT BE REVOKED.”

So, the government officials flatter the king and propose that he establish a statute making him “God of the Month”, so to speak.

And they propose that anyone who disobeys this statute be executed.

But there’s something wrong with their claim in verse 7, isn’t there?

★ “**All**” the commissioners, prefects, satraps, high officials and governors consulted together? They left someone out didn’t they! — Daniel wasn’t in on that agreement.

And because of his pride, the king doesn’t seem to notice that his top official isn’t one of the men standing before him making this request.

★ So we see in verse 9 that Darius signs the document, making it an irrevocable statute.

So the second principle we see in this chapter is this:

★ LIVING A GOD-HONORING LIFE DOESN’T PROTECT US FROM LIFE’S INJUSTICES.

How unfair it is that Daniel could be condemned to death for doing what has made him the exceptional man he is —

namely, praying to and worshiping God.

But we must never forget that **life isn’t fair**, ...

Life isn’t fair,

and God **never promised** us that it would be.

But God can, and will, use the things we **consider unfair** for His honor and glory in **our lives** and the **lives of others** if we **cooperate** with Him and **trust** Him.

C. DANIEL'S RESPONSE TO THE STATUTE

So, the trap is laid for Daniel, and his enemies wait for their chance to catch him praying to God. Verse 10 says that when Daniel learned that the document was signed, he went back to his house, where he had his windows open toward Jerusalem in his roof chamber.

And the Bible says that Daniel ...

 CONTINUED KNEELING ON HIS KNEES THREE TIMES A DAY, PRAYING AND GIVING THANKS BEFORE HIS GOD, AS HE HAD BEEN DOING PREVIOUSLY.

It doesn't appear that the king's statute causes Daniel any sleepless nights or inner turmoil. He had made the decision over 65 years before that he was going to live up to his highest calling as a child of God —

he was going to live, with God's help, in a way that would bring honor and glory to God in everything he said and did.

So, when he hears about the king's statute, he doesn't have to pray about or think about what to do.

He simply goes about his life as if the decree had never been signed and put into effect, and continues to pray.

D. DANIEL'S ENEMIES CATCH HIM PRAYING

So, what happens next?

 Verses 11 through 13 say that Daniel's enemies spy on Daniel and find him praying to God, ***just as they knew he would.***

And so they go to the king to tell him about Daniel.

 ¹³ "DANIEL, WHO IS ONE OF THE EXILES FROM JUDAH, PAYS NO ATTENTION TO YOU, O KING, OR TO THE INJUNCTION WHICH YOU SIGNED, BUT KEEPS MAKING HIS PETITION THREE TIMES A DAY."

E. KING DARIUS' RESPONSE TO THE NEWS

Without reading ahead, how do you think King Darius is going to respond to this news about Daniel disobeying his decree?

What will this proud king, who gladly let went along with his officials' suggestion that no one pray to any god except him for one month, do?

You would expect this proud king to become furious like Nebuchadnezzar did in chapter 3 when Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego refused to worship his image of gold.

"How dare he! Throw him into the lions' den!"

But this isn't how Darius reacts at all.

 Verse 14 says that he is deeply distressed and spends all day trying to figure out how to rescue Daniel.

Darius is grieved, and realizes that his officials had lied to him and tricked him into signing the decree.

He might also be distressed because he realizes that all that has happened is the because of his pride.

Whatever the reason, it is very clear that Darius cares very much for Daniel, not only as an official but probably as a trusted friend.

Which is why verse 14 says that he sets his mind on delivering Daniel for the rest of the day, until sunset.

But there is nothing he can do because a decree such as his cannot be undone for any reason.

★ So, at sunset, after Daniel's accusers remind the king of his duty to carry out the decree, Darius reluctantly does what he has to do.

F. DANIEL IS THROWN INTO THE LIONS' DEN

Verse 16 says that Daniel was cast into the lion's den, but before the lid was shut, the king said an amazing thing to him.

★ ¹⁶ "DANIEL, MAY YOUR GOD, WHOM YOU SERVE CONTINUALLY, DELIVER YOU!"

Think about it.

Pagan King Darius is encouraging one of the most faithful followers of God in the Bible not to worry because God will protect him!

What a testimony to Daniel's faithfulness to God as he served King Darius!

Darius knows not only that Daniel believes in a god, but that this God is powerful and faithful to His followers.

He knows that Daniel *is the man he is* because of His God and his faithfulness to his God.

So, the third important principle to keep in mind as we live our life for the glory of God is this:

★ NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF YOUR PERSONAL EXAMPLE.

Have you ever been tempted to think that those you live with, work with, or go to school with aren't being impacted at all by your life?

I have, and I imagine every Christian here has as well.

At those times, we need to remember Paul's words in Galatians 6:9.

★ LET US NOT LOSE HEART IN DOING GOOD, FOR IN DUE TIME WE WILL REAP IF WE DO NOT GROW WEARY.

If we are walking with God and seeking to honor Him in our life, our life *is* making a difference.

People usually won't tell us that it is, but they're watching us.

And some of them will be moved by what they see and hear, and someday, they might put their trust in Jesus.

Of course, I can't **guarantee** that they will repent — that decision is between them and God, but if we are walking humbly and faithfully with the Lord,

God **will use** our life and our testimony to reveal Jesus and His love and power to them.

And this is what Daniel's life of faithfulness did in the life of King Darius.

★ Daniel 6:17 says that a stone was put over the mouth of the den, after which the king and his nobles sealed it with their signet rings.

And I imagine Daniel's enemies gloating, and rejoicing that their rival has been dealt with once and for all.

I want you to note here that God didn't prevent Daniel from having to go into the lions' den.

From the start of chapter 6 to this point in the story, God didn't prevent Daniel's enemies from plotting against him.

And He didn't intervene to save Daniel from being thrown into the lions' den. There is nothing in chapter 6 to indicate that God spoke to Daniel and told him everything would be all right in the end.

It appears that faithful Daniel, who had done nothing wrong, faced this unfair treatment without complaining to God or to the king,

and just like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, with no promise from God that he would survive!

The same is true for Christians today, isn't it.

No matter how faithfully we walk with the Lord,

there are times when He allows things to happen and gives us no clear promise that He will deliver us from those trials.

But we need to keep these facts in mind —

First, trials usually aren't the result of some sin in our life.

Also, they certainly aren't a sign of God's unfaithfulness to us.

Rather, trials often signal the beginning, not the end, of God's activity!

On a feelings level, when we encounter unwanted problems, sadness, failure, etc.,

our first thought is often that God has let us down or that He is not working on our behalf.

We feel that if God were doing what He should be, He would've protected us from harm or sadness or accidents or whatever.

We tend to feel God's love and His hand at work during the so-called "good times" and doubt Him in the bad times.

But in Scripture, and in the lives of many of us here, I think, we see that it is often trials that open up the door to God's involvement in our lives.

It is in times of trial that we are shaken out of our complacency or our lukewarm Christian life and begin to **really seek** the Lord.

Which means that it's in **times of trial** that we have the **opportunity** to see God at work in our lives and the lives of others.

G. KING DARIUS SPENDS A SLEEPLESS NIGHT

Back to our story.

★ In verse 18 we see that the king spends the night fasting, and without his concubines.

He is probably berating himself for his pride and foolishness.

He had allowed himself to be flattered by his wicked administrators into making the foolish decree that had resulted in his friend being thrown into the lions' den.

He is so worried about Daniel that he doesn't sleep all night, and I think there's a good chance he was praying to God for Daniel.

★ The Bible goes on to say that as soon as dawn broke, Darius runs to the lions' den to check on Daniel.

III DANIEL IS PROTECTED BY GOD

A. DARIUS FINDS DANIEL SAFE IN THE MORNING

He orders the stone removed, gets down on his hands and knees, and calls out with a troubled voice into the darkness below,

★ ²⁰ "DANIEL, SERVANT OF THE LIVING GOD, HAS YOUR GOD, WHOM YOU CONSTANTLY SERVE, BEEN ABLE TO DELIVER YOU FROM THE LIONS?"

Suddenly the king hears a sound that is like music to his ears.

★ ²¹ “O KING, LIVE FOREVER! ²² MY GOD SENT HIS ANGEL AND SHUT THE LIONS’ MOUTHS AND THEY HAVE NOT HARMED ME.”

Imagine the relief that King Darius must have felt when he heard Daniel’s voice rising up from the darkness below.

Verse 23 says that Darius

★ ... 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.

So, just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who stood before King Nebuchadnezzar completely unharmed after being in the furnace, Daniel stood before Darius completely unharmed.

B. DARIUS PUNISHES DANIEL’S ENEMIES AND PRAISES GOD

After making sure that Daniel was safe,

Darius dealt with the wicked officials who had lied to him and tried to get Daniel killed by casting them into the lions’ den.

And the Bible says that the lions grabbed them before they even reached the floor of the den, and devoured them.

Chapter 6 ends in much the same way chapters 2, 3 and 4 did, with a pagan king praising the true and living God.

★ 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! ²⁶ I MAKE A DECREE THAT IN ALL THE DOMINION OF MY KINGDOM MEN ARE TO FEAR AND TREMBLE BEFORE THE GOD OF DANIEL; FOR HE IS THE LIVING GOD AND ENDURING FOREVER,

★ HIS KINGDOM IS ONE WHICH WILL NOT BE DESTROYED, AND HIS DOMINION WILL BE FOREVER.

²⁷ “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.”

C. GOD BLESSES DANIEL

Chapter 6 ends with these words:

★ ²⁸ SO THIS DANIEL ENJOYED SUCCESS IN THE REIGN OF DARIUS AND IN THE REIGN OF CYRUS THE PERSIAN.

CONCLUSION

But I don’t think the main focus of chapter 6 is Daniel or his success.

Chapter 6 begins with King Darius making a decree and ends with one as well, but oh how different the decrees are!

God has changed Darius’ heart and thinking greatly, because Daniel chose to remain faithful to God no matter what might happen to him,

just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were used to impact the life of King

Nebuchadnezzar more than 60 years earlier.
And this is the main point of chapter 6, I think.
God wants to use those who are His children by faith in Jesus Christ to impact those around us.
He has a purpose in the trials He **allows** in our lives.
So, I'd like to close with this final principle.

 **HARDSHIPS IN THE HANDS OF GOD CAN BECOME TOOLS FOR GOD'S USE.**

God has the ability to use our hardship for His eternal purposes in the lives of those around us, as well as in our life.

When things don't go the way we want them to, He wants us to trust Him and not question His goodness or His love.

In those times, He offers us the grace, strength, and increased faith we need to do this, if we sincerely want Him to.

And the question every follower of Jesus needs to consider is this —

 **"Am I willing to allow God to use me, no matter how hard the trial I face may be, to help others come to know and love Him too?"**

Friends, when we stand before the Lord one day, the hardships of this life will be the farthest thing from our mind.

When the Lord says to us, "Look around you at those who are here because you let Me shine through your life,"

none of our suffering, pain, loss, or sacrifice will matter at all!

We see in Daniel 6 that God holds our life and death, our todays and our tomorrows in His hand.

He wants us to trust Him in the midst of our trials.

He is in control, no matter what the outcome ends up being.

Sometimes it will be what we hope and pray for, and sometimes not.

But in either case, God is in control.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, life is sometimes hard and even unfair, even when we are trying to live our lives in a way that honors You.

Even if we are Your children, we and those we love face hard, sad, and even tragic circumstances.

Thank You that You never abandon us, especially in hard times, but walk with us through our difficult days.

Lord, like Daniel, help us to remain faithful to You no matter what happens.

Shine Your light and truth through us and help those around us to seek for You until they find You.

We pray all these things in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen.