

Daniel 6

Here we are at what is likely the most well-known story in the book of Daniel. When many people think of Daniel, this is the account that immediately comes to mind. Because it is so familiar, it can be easy to move through it quickly, but there is actually a lot here that is worth slowing down and considering.

Historically, we need to remember that the Babylonian Empire has just fallen, and the Medo-Persian (Medes) Empire has taken over. This would not have been a calm or orderly transition. Typically, when a kingdom is overthrown, especially one as powerful as Babylon, there is chaos, instability, and often the removal or execution of former officials. Yet one of the first places we see the grace of God in this chapter is in Daniel's life. He is spared in the midst of all of this upheaval. Not only is his life preserved, but his position is as well. While King Belshazzar is judged and killed, Daniel is protected and even elevated under the new kingdom. This reminds us that God is sovereign over kings and kingdoms, and He is able to preserve His people even in the most uncertain circumstances.

As the chapter unfolds, we see something very familiar happen again. Daniel is envied and targeted because of his faithfulness. His integrity and faithfulness sets him apart, and instead of being celebrated, it makes him a target. The officials cannot find any fault in his work or character, so they decide that the only way to trap him is through his devotion to God. This alone says a great deal about Daniel's life—his faith was not something hidden or occasional; it was consistent and visible to everyone around him.

One of the most powerful aspects of this chapter is Daniel's age. When he first took a stand for his faith in chapter 1, he was likely a teenager, somewhere between 14 and 18 years old. Now, by the time we reach chapter 6, Daniel is an older man, likely around 80 to 90 years old. That means we are looking at over 60 years of consistent faithfulness to God. Through multiple kings, changing cultures, and even the fall of an entire empire, Daniel is still found praying, still obedient, and still unwilling to compromise. What a powerful witness that is.

This is something we can and should model in our own lives, and it is especially important for the youth to understand. Daniel's faithfulness in his later years did not suddenly appear—it was built over time, starting when he was young. The habits he formed, the convictions he held, and the time he invested in knowing God when he was a teenager carried him through the rest of his life. This is why it is so important for young people to take their faith seriously now. What may seem small—reading Scripture, learning biblical truth, choosing obedience—are actually investments that will shape the direction of their entire lives. This is also a good place for leaders to reflect on and share how early investments in their own lives have paid dividends

over time, or, if they came to faith later, how things might have been different if they had been grounded in God's Word earlier.

Another major takeaway from this passage is the reality that we can trust God to deliver us, but we must also understand that His deliverance does not always look the way we would prefer. Daniel is delivered, but not before being thrown into the lions' den. If we are honest, most of us would prefer a different outcome. We would want God to intervene before the situation becomes dangerous—to provide a loophole, to change the king's mind, or to stop the event from happening altogether. But that is not what happens here. Daniel spends the night in what would have been a dark, filthy, and likely terrifying place. God does not keep him from the den; He meets him in it.

This is an important truth for us to grasp. We should not evaluate whether God is if we are walking in the favor of God based on how close we are to danger or how difficult our circumstances feel. God may allow us to walk into situations that are uncomfortable, messy, or even frightening, but He remains fully in control within them. His presence and His power are not limited by our circumstances.

When thinking about this, I am reminded of the hymn written by William Cowper, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way." In it he writes, "The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower. Blind unbelief is sure to err and scan his works in vain. God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain." That captures something we see both in Daniel's life and in our own. There are seasons that feel bitter—times of difficulty with friends, struggles within family, or a general dissatisfaction with where we are in life. Many of our students may be walking through those kinds of seasons right now. What this passage reminds us is that God is still at work in those moments. His purposes are unfolding even when we cannot see or understand them, and what feels bitter now may ultimately produce something good.

In the end, this chapter brings us back to a foundational truth: the safest place we can be is in right standing with God. Daniel's story shows us that no amount of earthly security—whether it is power, position, or protection—can ultimately save us. The king thought he had built a system that could not be undone, yet it failed. Daniel's accusers thought they had secured his destruction, yet they were the ones who faced judgment. Everything apart from God proves to be unstable.

For us, it is a reminder that we cannot place our trust in the things that make us feel secure, whether that is relationships, success, comfort, or approval from others. Just like Daniel, we are ultimately dependent on God alone. There is nothing and no one else who can truly deliver, sustain, or redeem us. And as we see clearly in this passage, God is both able and faithful to do exactly that.