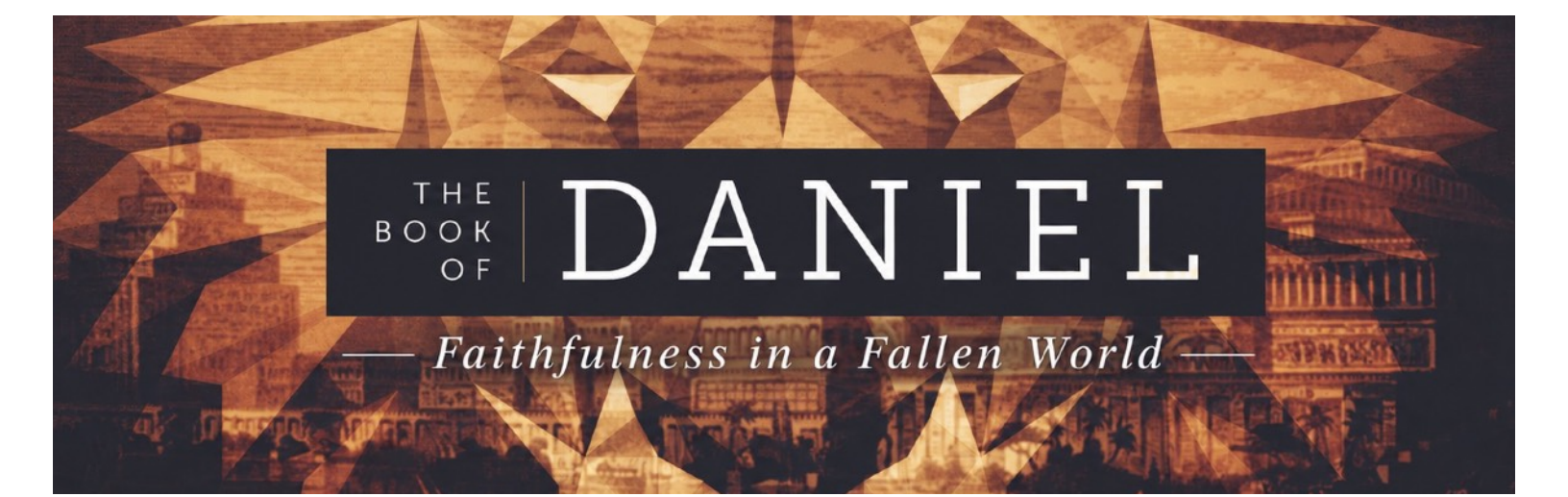




THE
BOOK
OF

DANIEL

— *Faithfulness in a Fallen World* —

DANIEL 6

9/27/2026

#7 - “Stay Ready — Pray”

Intro:

As the offering baskets are coming around, grab your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Daniel, chapter 6.

Not long ago our boys got to take a tour of a local fire-station. They loved seeing the big trucks, all the lights, the helmets and gear. But, what stuck with me was the sleeping quarters, and how they explained the protocol when the alarm sounds. So much attention is given to preparedness. The fireman doesn't hear the alarm and say - *“Well, now how do I strap on this gear? Where's my helmet? Anybody seen my boots?”*

Of course not. Those guys have their stuff set by the bed, they're prepared to go at a moment's notice. They've practiced it hundreds of times. They know who's driving the truck and who's got the hoses. — here's the point.

Crisis is not the time to get ready.

Crisis reveals your preparation.

In the same way, Daniel didn't become a man of faith when they threw him in with the lions. Those weren't his first prayers. The crisis of the lions den didn't make him a praying man, it revealed the man he had been becoming for years.

You don't have to get ready if you stay ready.

Today we turn to one of the most famous and familiar stories in all the bible... Daniel and the ____ (Lion's Den). Its a really good thing that this story is familiar. It means the Bible is still popular, and stories like this settle in our hearts and minds. But familiarity can also be a problem. Because you think you know the story, you may check out. You've already heard this one. No need to focus for real... but listen up, one of the truths we believe about the Bible is that it is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, able to pierce to the core of you, separating your thoughts and intentions, discerning your heart. (Heb. 4:12) — When we read the Bible, the Bible is reading us. Don't presume you already know this... expect the Lord to speak to you today.

Another danger of familiar passages is that we jump pretty quickly into moralizing the story. Daniel is a hero, and we want to be like him... so, we quickly make our checklists and aim to be courageous like Daniel and pray like Daniel. But... When we only say "Dare to be a Daniel" - we leave with all hype, but without the ability to follow through. If we look only to him and try to live like he did, we'll be depressed and disappointed in our own failures to perform as he did. But, if we see in Daniel a shadow of the true and better Daniel, Jesus Christ... we not only have a great example, but we have the perfect substitute. Jesus came, not just to model the way, He came to be the way. You can try your best to perform under pressure like Daniel and never really know Jesus.

But ironically, if you know and love Jesus, you will begin to be more like Daniel. And while He is a good example, good work with the good book always takes you to the good shepherd. The written Word is always leading us to the living Word, the person and work of Christ.

Daniel chapter 6... stand in honor of God's Word.

READ — DANIEL 6

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; 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. 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. 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. 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."

Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! 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. 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.” Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

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. Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. 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.” 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.”

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. 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.”

Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!” 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. Then the king went to his

palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. 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?” Then Daniel said to the king, “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.” 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. 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.

Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: “Peace be multiplied to you. 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.

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. ”

So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

PRAY

Father... we love this passage. Its familiar and still so powerful. We look to Daniel and His commitment to prayer, and immediately feel the lack in our own lives. Lord, if you work nothing else in us today, stir up this church to recommit to prayer. But Lord, we ask for even more. Give us a fresh vision. We need you to guide us, to steer this ship. Show us which way to go, and give us the passion to set the sails, expecting you to breathe a fresh wind of your Spirit. Father, we live in our own Babylon, but we don't want to be swallowed up in compromise... give us the faith to be courageous for your great name. In Jesus name we pray, AMEN.

SERMON

Daniel was distinguished, set apart from all the other leaders and overseers. He had an excellent spirit. He had proven himself to be trustworthy - notice his role was already “so that the king might suffer no loss” — Daniel was serving as *loss-prevention* keeping leaders accountable and being a good manager. He was set to be promoted as the president over all the governors of the various districts... probably second only to King Darius.

Well, the thought of a Jewish exile being elevated above them made those other leaders burn with jealousy and hatred. They went digging to find any dirt on Daniel... they looked in all the closets to expose the skeletons. But, he has been consistently a man of character for so long that they couldn't find anything. That's amazing, right? A politician with no skeletons in the closet?

So they scheme up a plan to trap Daniel. They know the one thing he will never abandon... one area that He is most devoted, even more than his faithfulness to king Darius, Daniel is a man of faithful prayer to His God. The only way to get him is to somehow make his devotion to God an act of defiance to the king. So, they manipulate and twist the King with his own ego to sign a decree for all the people to pray only to him for 30 days. *O King... you're such a great king. Whatever your people need, you provide. You are the greatest of all time. The people need to see you as their supreme provider. Call them to pray to you alone and prove your greatness to them. So that Anyone found praying to any other god for 30 days must be cast in the den of lions.*

Now... how bad do you hate someone, to not just want them dead, but want them to be mauled and eaten by hungry lions? What a terrible way to die. — let me just pause there and warn you against the jealousy in your own heart. Unchecked envy is dangerous. You'll find yourself doing all kinds of evil against another person if you let jealousy drive you.

So, Daniel is a good man, he does the right thing almost all the time. Certainly he's not sinless, but there's nothing significant enough to bring an accusation against him. They can't attack his character, so they go after his devotion. So, in their jealous rage, they bring their plan to the king... *all of us agree that you are a*

great king and you should issue this decree... but, not all of them agreed. Daniel was not among them. He was their leader, but he wasn't in on this scheme, he was the target of it.

You have to see the genius in their plan. They see the king's weakness is his ego, his pride. And they see Daniel's consistency in prayer. So, they leverage both.

Last week we saw the dangers of pride, and that's a repeated theme here in this chapter. King Darius is trapped by his own ego. He signs a decree that ends up condemning his most trusted leader, and ties his own hands. All because of his own pride.

OK... you know this story. Daniel refuses to abide by the King's decree. He knows it was signed, and he knows the consequences. Even still, he goes to pray 3 times a day, boldly - with the window open facing Jerusalem, and here's a key phrase: as he had done previously. (6:10)

Now, we've seen prayer has been a significant part of this book, but at this point, prayer takes center stage. It is actually made illegal, with the death penalty.

Consider this: Not praying to God was worse, in Daniel's mind, than being eaten by lions. He could have prayed silently, or just not bowed by the window, or he could've just waited out the 30 days. But... Prayer is more precious than life itself. Maybe because life without the life-giver is an empty shell. Prayer is precious.

1. Build a life of Prayer.

Daniel's pattern, his practice was to pray 3 times a day. These are not impromptu prayers, I'm sure he would have that conversational

prayer also... but these are dedicated, blocked out times each day. Daniel goes to a certain place at a certain time. He's not multitasking. It was predictable and his regular practice. So predictable that his enemies knew it was the best way to trap him. His life as built around His relationship with God.

If it were illegal to pray, is there enough evidence to convict you?

When we opened this book, Daniel and his friends were probably teenagers, but by this point Daniel is in his 80's. He has a well established rhythm of prayer.

When prayer was outlawed, he didn't have a decision to make... he had a discipline to keep... a relationship He would rather die than live without. — *Prayer is more precious than Life.*

Daniel knew the penalty for praying would be the Lion's den. He couldn't have known he would be spared, just like Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego didn't know they would be rescued from the fire. So Daniel knew the cost and counted prayer worth dying for. Can you say along with Daniel - *"You'll have to take my life before you take my prayer."*?

JD Greear says- "Courage in the lions' den comes from consistency in the prayer closet."

In just a couple weeks, we will be kicking off another 21 days of Prayer. This is always a great time for a collective commitment to prayer. Lock yourself into a time and place, maybe try journaling. 21 days is long enough to train yourself to begin a new habit. We need to lock in to habits of holiness.

Daniel didn't decide to get serious about prayer when the crisis came... he was prayed up and ready.

2. Pray to the Lion King.

Is your God able? Do you have a God who CAN?

I like to say that we pray to a God who CARES and a God who CAN. Our God is Powerful! Daniel was thrown into a den of lions. Everybody knows the lion is the king of the jungle - Mufassa! But, God is the Lion King. He created the Lions, and they do His bidding.

Notice, King Darius was wringing his hands, doing everything he could to undo the decree... then, while Daniel was in with the Lions, Darius couldn't sleep. He didn't want any diversion. He fasted and mourned. He was desperate - he was powerless. The lions in his kingdom, were not under his Control. The contrast is amazing.

Meanwhile, Daniel is cuddled up with a fur blanket. He's sleeping peacefully, totally trusting in the power of the God to whom He prays. Verse 22, Daniel says "My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths" — God is so mighty, He can send an angel to handle the lions.

When you pray, do you believe the God to whom you pray is that powerful? I like to imagine Daniel praying with the Lions...

"Lord God, these lions are no challenge for you. You controlled the fiery furnace so that it burned off their hand-cuffs, but didn't singe a hair on their heads. You brought down the mighty walls of Jericho, while they marched and prayed. You parted the Red-Sea, so that all Israel's walked across on dry ground, then brought the wall of water to crash down on their Egyptian enemies. — Oh Lord, NOTHING is impossible for you!"

When you pray, rehearse the history of His Power. A good memory is a great tool in the toolbox of faith. Remember the moments in your own life when God showed up!

In this story, Daniel is rescued... by the mighty power of God.

Don't miss what happens next. The salvation of the righteous is paired with the judgement of the wicked. Daniel's jealous friends were thrown in with the lions, and God didn't restrict their appetites. Darius had been manipulated, and was made to feel helpless, but now He is not helpless and he brings down the hammer of justice.

The ultimate Lion King is Jesus Christ. He is the Lion of Judah, and is the everlasting King. Daniel points us to Jesus in so many ways... here's a few:

- Daniel was so faithful, they couldn't catch him doing wrong, so they manipulated a way to make him guilty. — Jesus was truly sinless... but, Pilate too felt trapped and had to sentence him to die.
- Jesus was thrown in to the den of death, the stone rolled to shut the tomb and it was sealed with the signet ring.
- An angel came to Daniel's aid... Jesus told them that He could call 12,000 angels to his rescue, but the Scriptures must be fulfilled.
- At dawn, Darius came to the tomb ... At dawn on Sunday morning, the women came to Jesus' tomb. Both were ALIVE.
- Daniel came out because God stopped the lions mouths, Jesus came out of the grave because He defeated death itself!

Jesus entered the Den we deserved so that we could be brought safely into the presence of God. All glory to Christ!

3. Pray for the GLORY of God among all Nations.

Darius responds to the saving power of God with a new decree.

He calls on all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell on the earth... now, that's a glimpse of the undoing of what happened in Babel back in Genesis 11 at the Tower of Babel. And even here in 540BC, Babylon is a globalized nation with many gods — but Darius says... NO, there is one God, the God of Daniel. This God is the one true God. The call is for the whole world to know and fear God. Jesus called for us to preach his gospel to all nations. (Matt. 24:14)

This is our mission! This is the prayer of our hearts! We want the GLORY of God in the hearts of people in this community, students at Jax State, the homeless... and all peoples, languages, nations. This is why we would go to Egypt and help a church plant get started — because our God is the one true God and He is worthy of the worship of Egyptians and Muslims in Lebanon and Syria. Its why we support Gary and the mission to Haiti, because God loves them and He is worthy of their worship!

Jesus' work, giving himself - the righteous for the unrighteous, was to bring us to God. He is the way, the only way to the Father. Prayer is our lifeline to connect in relationship to our glorious God. Prayer isn't just for the moment of crisis. Don't wait to call on God when you feel like you need Him.

- Pray when life is good.
- Pray when you don't know what to do.

- Pray in the morning and in the evening.
- Pray when God answers, and when he doesn't
- Pray... before you panic, pray.

You don't have to get ready if you stay ready.

Build a life of Prayer.