

DANIEL'S CONSISTENCY: PART 2 (6:19-28)

You know how when you type something into Google, it will “auto-fill” for you, based on your past search history? And sometimes that’s helpful, but sometimes it just gets on your nerves. Just because I searched that person or topic *one time* five years ago, it doesn’t mean I want to go there every time I’m making a search! But Google knows that we follow patterns, so it auto-fills our search bar according to how we’ve trained it.

I tell you that because the same thing is true in how you respond to adversity. Your heart *auto-fills* your response based on the patterns you’ve established – good or bad.¹

That’s why Daniel has such measured stress responses when he faces a crisis. You never see him overly anxious or stressed because, over time, he established healthy patterns.

For example, when Daniel and the boys were...

- **Captured and deported to Babylon as teenagers.** So, they type in, “God, how do we face this trial?” The response: “Walk by faith, remain faithful in prayer, obey My Word no matter what.”
- **Facing the food test.** They type in, “God, how do we face *this* trial?” The response: “Walk by faith, remain faithful in prayer, obey My Word no matter what.”
- **Forced to bow before Nebuchadnezzar’s idol or be burned alive in the fiery furnace.** So they type in, “God, what do we do in *this* situation?” By this point, their own heart begins to auto-fill God’s response that has been established: “Walk by faith, remain faithful in prayer, obey My Word no matter what.”
- **Threatened with the lion’s den if Daniel prayed to God.** By this point, Daniel doesn’t even have to do a search. He did exactly what his heart had been trained to do – even under the threat of death: “Walk by faith, remain faithful in prayer, obey God’s Word no matter what.”

And all of this is teaching us two practical truths:

¹ From JD Greear

- 1) **The fiery trials of this life are never going to stop.** After every crisis, we tend to think, "Okay, I did it – I lived by faith. Can't it just be easy now?" The answer is no.
- 2) **God uses each crises to stretch our faith more and more...**
 - In the early trials, they at least had each other.
 - Then his friends faced a deadly crisis *without* Daniel – their leader.
 - Then, with the lion's den, Daniel faced the crisis alone.

That's some of the lessons we're learning from Daniel's life.

And that leads us to where we left off last week...

In verses 1-3 we saw that Daniel was appointed as the prime minister of the new Medo-Persian empire. And some of the other high officials were not happy about Daniel's promotion because they would now have to "give an account" to Daniel for the money they were stealing from king Darius. So, a few of these officials began looking for a way to get rid of Daniel.

But, in verses 4-10 "they couldn't find any ground for complaint or any fault, because Daniel was faithful." So, they tricked the king into making a law that prevented anyone from praying to any god or man, except to the king, for 30 days. They wanted to use Daniel's consistency against him. They knew he wouldn't stop praying and he would never pray to anyone other than the true God.

And sure enough, just like any other day, Daniel entered the upper room of his house where the windows open, and he prayed to the one true God. Daniel was consistent in his *professional* life, in his *private* life, and in his *prayer* life.

So, his enemies told the king. And, when the king realized he had been tricked, he spent all day trying to find a loophole in the law so he could rescue Daniel. But, under the law of the Medes and Persians, it was virtually impossible to revoke a law.

So, Darius was forced to have Daniel thrown into the den of lions and a stone was rolled over the entrance and sealed (vs.16). Then Darius went home and spent a *miserable* night worried about Daniel (vs.18).

That night, the king was wrestling with a question that we also have to wrestle with: "Can something be legally permitted, yet morally wrong?" Even a pagan king knows the answer to that question.

So, the king laid there all night wondering what will happen to Daniel in that dark pit surrounded by hungry lions. And this is where we pick up tonight...

Daniel 6:19-23 *"Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions."²⁰ 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?"²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever!²² 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 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."*

Darius had waited all night for the sun to finally rise. So, he ran to the lion's den, and when he arrived, he "cried out in a tone of anguish" (lit. *screamed*²) to see if Daniel was okay.

In verse 20, this lost king describes Daniel as a man "who serves God continually."



Do your classmates, teammates, and coworkers see YOU that way?

You may think, "Well sure they do Gene. After all, I've got a cool tattoo of a Bible verse, a cross on my necklace, a Christian sticker on my car, and a verse in my bio, and I wear lots of Christian shirts!" Those things are fine but I'm not talking about external religious markings. I mean, when people watch your life, do they see a person who "continuously serves their God" even when nobody else does? Even in times of great adversity? Even if it means death?

You see, Daniel understood that God is faithful EVEN in those times of great adversity. In fact, verse 22 says an angel was with Daniel through the night keeping the lions from attacking. Who was this angel? We're

² Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Da 6:19–24). Joplin, MO: College Press.

never told but, as John MacArthur and several other commentators point out, it was most likely the fourth Person who was also in the fiery furnace with Daniel's friends (the pre-incarnate Christ)!³ The fourth Man in the fire is now the second Man in the lion's den. The *Lion of the Tribe of Judah* looked at those lions around Daniel and said, "Don't even think about it!"

Psalm 34:7 "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them."

Hebrews 11:33 "Through faith [Daniel] stopped the mouths of lions"

In other words, Daniel's *faithfulness* got him into trouble, and his *faith* got him out of it.⁴ BUT we have to remember that this is NOT always God's choice. For many Christians in the Roman Colosseum, God DIDN'T close the mouths of lions. You see, I may be like...

- Peter who preached faithfully and 3,000 were saved.
- Stephen who preached faithfully and they stoned him to death.

In fact, I just mentioned Hebrews 11 which says, "Through faith [Daniel] stopped the mouths of lions." But let me show you the rest of that passage...

Hebrews 11:36–38 "Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

And even today, all around the world, Christians are being killed because they refuse to compromise their relationship with God.

Illustration: Current slaughter of Christians in Nigeria...

- 7,000 killed between Jan-Aug of this year (1,000 per month!).
- More than 52,000 murdered since 2009.
- More than 19,000 churches destroyed.
- Millions of Christians had their homes burned and property taken.
- Pastors have been kidnapped during church services.
- Congregations have been massacred during worship services.⁵

³ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2006). *The MacArthur study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Da 6:14–27). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

⁴ Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (Da 6:23). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

⁵ 52,000 Christians Have Been Murdered in Nigeria — Why Is Nobody Talking About It? - RELEVANT

"Only a real risk tests the reality of a belief. You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you." – C.S. Lewis

Daniel understood this. But in Daniel's case, God chose to glorify Himself by delivering Daniel from the lions. However, the story doesn't end so well for the men who falsely accused Daniel, which leads us to our first point...

1. Daniel's enemies were caught in their own trap.

Daniel 6:24 "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."

Their plan backfired – like Haaman being hung on his own gallows in the story of Esther (7:9-10).⁶

Daniel's "accusers" were not the *entire* 120 satraps together with the two chief commissioners, but only a small number of them who had actually carried out this plan against Daniel.

When the king realized their involvement, he threw these crooked men into the same den of lions that Daniel was thrown into. And it says their wives and children were thrown in as well. You see, our sin never affects just us; it always affects those around us – especially those closest to us! (Korah in Num. 16:1–35 and Achan in Josh. 7).⁷

Think of a sports team. When a player breaks a rule and gets a penalty, it's not only *that* player who is punished. The entire team is punished or penalized for it.

Remember: this was the law that *these* wicked men created. *They* are the ones who came up with this law and now they were reaping what they had sown!

Proverbs 11:8 "The righteous is delivered from trouble, and the wicked walks into it instead."

⁶ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Da 6:19–24). Joplin, MO: College Press.

⁷ Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (Da 6:24–25). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

2. God was praised because of Daniel's faithfulness.

Daniel 6:25-27 "Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you." ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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."

Once again, a pagan king was praising the one true God because of Daniel's faithfulness. And Darius was acknowledging that God had done what he could never do: *shut the mouths of lions!*

So, what did all this mean for Daniel?

3. Daniel's influence was elevated even higher.

Daniel 6:28 "So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

This was the continual story of Daniel – every time the enemy tried to put him in a *pit*, God would cause him to *prosper*. Even in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul is referring to Daniel's faithfulness when he says...

2 Timothy 4:17 "But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth."

Paul was saying, "Like Daniel, I was rescued from the lion's mouth!" Daniel shows us that if you walk faithfully with the Lord wherever He calls you, it won't necessarily be safe, but it will be a life filled with adventure, meaning, and purpose!

Did you notice how the story of *Daniel* continues to whisper the name of *Jesus*...

- Daniel was framed by his political enemies, arrested while he was praying in a private location, and convicted of false charges. That's exactly what happened to Jesus.

- Darius – a political leader – pleaded for Daniel’s release but was unsuccessful. Pilate would also plead for Jesus’s life unsuccessfully.
- Daniel was thrown into a pit of death (meant to be his tomb), a stone was rolled over the entrance, and it was sealed with the official seal. That’s exactly what happened to Jesus.
- At dawn, the king rushed to the pit to see if Daniel was really alive. And the disciples did the same thing with Jesus.

But there’s one big difference between Daniel and Jesus...

When Daniel came out of the pit ALIVE, his enemies were thrown in and destroyed. But Jesus went into that tomb to be punished by God so that *His enemies wouldn’t have to be*. He did that for you and me!

No Small Groups (Leaders helping with OCC packing party)