



October 13, 2019

“Lessons from the Lions’ Den”

Daniel 6

Pastor Gary Hamrick

In today’s study, Pastor Gary takes us to one of the most familiar stories in all of the Bible: Daniel and the lion’s den. He brings modern application based on the main characters of the story, and he helps us learn more about a biblical perspective of jealousy, integrity, loyalty, and the sovereignty of God.

Historical Background

1. Daniel was about 83 years old at the time of his experience in the lions’ den, which means that he had been serving various kings for more than 65 years.
2. Pastor Gary said, “Daniel was always most loyal and faithful to the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And [his] faithfulness to God [was] about to be tested in probably the biggest way here in chapter six. [Daniel] was probably never more prepared for this test as he [was in this time] because he [had] been serving God for a lifetime. And a lifetime of faithfulness to God has steeled him for this moment.”
3. Pastor Gary said, “Sometimes we read this story and we think of it as something that is good for children’s story books, but it really doesn’t have much relevance for us. It’s a really fun story [but] some may not believe that it actually happened. People often dismiss this [story] as just a fable, but it’s not a fable at all. It needs to be read and understood for what it is, and that is a miraculous, amazing intervention of God’s power to rescue a man who would otherwise have suffered a very terrible death.”
4. Many liberal theologians don’t accept the miraculous, which leads them to embrace some of the most **ridiculous explanations** for how Daniel survived. There are three

popular theories. (Emphasis added)

- a. Daniel wasn't consumed by the lions because they weren't hungry.
 - b. Daniel must have hidden himself in a crevasse somewhere in the lions' den.
 - c. Daniel must have hidden himself under straw on the floor of the lions' den.
5. Pastor Gary said, "Like much of the Bible, you have to be willing to accept the miraculous to accept this story. If you don't accept the miraculous, then you are going to kind of dismiss this as some kind of a fable, best read in a children's story book."
6. Pastor Gary said, "Let me tell you how we should not accept this story. The danger in preaching this story is to say that Daniel represents you and me, and the lions' den represents all of our trials, and that God comes along and rescues us from all of our trials. I think when it is preached from [the angle] that God always rescues us from difficulties unharmed, it not only does a disservice to the text, but it does a disservice to all of us. God can and [God] does rescue people from trials. ... But [this] does not mean that God rescues us from every trial, every time. This is a unique story with a miraculous outcome for the glory of God. **[God's] unique ways that he operates is not necessarily a statement of a pattern, but it is always a statement of a principle.** [The] danger comes when we want to look at unique ways that God operates in the Scripture and adopt a pattern and say to ourselves, 'This is the way God worked on this occasion; thus, he must work this way in every occasion, every time, for all people.' That is not a good way to interpret Scripture. God does unique things. He often repeats those unique things. But he is not obligated to do what he did once or several times, every single time, for every person the same way. ... **This is a story of principle, that in principle God can and does deliver us from our trials, but even if we end up having to go through it, God is with us in it.** ... (Emphasis added)
7. **2 Peter 2:9** - *"... the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment."* (English Standard Version - ESV)

Instigators' Jealousy

8. The "organizational flow chart" of the Medo-Persian Empire includes King Darius, Daniel who was selected to be one of the three governors (administrators), and 120 satraps (princes).
- a. **Daniel 6:1-2** - *"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss."*

9. King Darius had in mind to make Daniel the ruler over the entire kingdom.
 - a. **Daniel 6:3** - *“Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.”*

10. The Divinity of the Kings was a common thing in ancient cultures.
 - a. All of the Pharaohs of Egypt and all of the Caesars of Rome were considered to be divine.

11. According to **Daniel 6:6–9**, the two governors and the 120 satraps made a proposition to King Darius that he become “God” for 30 days.

12. There were two forms of government during the time of Daniel.
 - a. The Babylonian Empire was an absolute monarchy, meaning that Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar were authoritative despots who could do whatever they pleased.
 - b. The Medo-Persian Empire was a constitutional monarchy, meaning that Darius could not undo anything he signed into law.

13. The effort of the two governors and the satraps was solely an attempt to entrap Daniel because he was going to be promoted, and their plan had nothing in it for the 83-year old Jewish man to just be removed from power; they wanted him to be killed!

14. Pastor Gary said, “They were just a bunch of insecure, jealous, back-stabbing ‘co-workers.’ ... Jealousy has a very destructive nature to it. ... Jealousy’s twin is envy, and it’s very difficult to distinguish between the two. [Envy] is wanting what someone else has, [similar] to covetousness. ... Jealousy is resenting what someone else has. ... Jealousy does some pretty irrational things. ... Jealousy is a very destructive emotion, not only to the one who possesses it but also to those who are the target of it. ... The Bible warns about jealousy over and over again as something that we must get rid of in our lives.”
 - a. **Romans 13:13–14** - *“Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”* (English Standard Version – ESV)
 - i. Jesus Christ is the antithesis of these things, and so we are encouraged to be like Christ and walk according to his will and his ways.
 - ii. We should be happy and celebrate the things that God has done in the lives of others.
 - b. **1 Corinthians 3:3** - *“For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?”* (English Standard

Version - ESV)

- c. **Galatians 5:19-20** - *“Now the works of the flesh are evident... jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions...”*

15. Pastor Gary said, “The difference is that God’s jealousy is a protective love, whereas the emotion of jealousy of our flesh is a destructive emotion. ... God is jealous for us, not jealous of us. It’s a statement of his protective nature... [The kind of] jealousy in this story is one of resentment of what someone else has or what someone else is, or what someone else has accomplished.”

Daniel’s Integrity

16. Daniel was unfazed by the new law!

- a. **Daniel 6:10** - *“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, **as was his custom since early days.**”* (Emphasis added)

17. Pastor Gary said, “[Daniel had developed] ‘holy habits.’ He was in the habit of doing what was right and what pleased God. He was going to continue to do [these things], no matter who objected, or who was offended, or what the personal consequences might be for himself. ... Integrity is doing the right thing... because you want to be a God-pleaser not a man-pleaser. ... Integrity, by definition, is doing right when no one else is looking. Daniel was a man of integrity, not because he put on a public display of integrity but because he was the same privately as he was publicly.”

- a. **Daniel 6:4** - *“... [Daniel] was faithful; nor was there any fault found in him.”*

18. Pastor Gary said, “Because [Daniel] was a man of integrity, he didn’t take the easy way out. ... [The edict or legal statute was only for 30 days.] ... If Daniel wasn’t a man of integrity... [it would have been easy for him to just ask God to let him have a month off!] ... [But he wanted to do what was right and what would honor God.]”

- a. **Proverbs 10:9** - *“He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known.”*
- b. **Proverbs 11:3** - *“The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.”*
- c. **Proverbs 20:7** - *“The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.”*

King Darius’ Loyalty

19. **Daniel 6:14** - *“And the king, when he heard these words, was **greatly displeased**”*

with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.” (Emphasis added)

20. **Daniel 6:16a** – *“So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions.”*
21. Pastor Gary said, “[King Darius] was loyal to his word. A loyal person in friendship first needs to exemplify loyalty in other areas of his or her life. ... He [didn’t] like what he [had] written. He [knew] he had been ‘played’ in some ways. He [had] exhausted [the search for] loopholes. He [realized] there was nothing he [could] do, so he had to carry out what he had [decreed and what he had written].”
22. According to **Psalm 15:4**, God honors the one who keeps his promise even when it hurts. ¹
23. Pastor Gary said, “[King] Darius was [loyal to] Daniel. [He] was a true friend to Daniel. Short of going back on his word, Darius did everything in his power to free him and when that didn’t work, [he entrusted him into the hands of God]. ... Darius was an encourager because that’s what friends do for friends. ...
 - a. **Daniel 6:16b** – *“But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, ‘Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.’ ”*
24. **Daniel 6:18–23** – *“Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, ‘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, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.’ Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.”*
25. Darius punished the instigators of the plot to eliminate Daniel.
 - a. **Daniel 6:24** – *“And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions – them, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.”*

¹ **Psalm 15:4** – *“... who keeps his oath even when it hurts.”*

God's Sovereignty

26. [Daniel 6:25-28](#) - *“Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”*
27. Pastor Gary said, **“We can't always predict the outcome with God, but we can always trust God with the outcome.** God holds our lives in the palm of his hand [and] we can rest in that because even if we have to go through the trial instead of being rescued from [the trial], God is with us. ... God is faithful in everything that we go through because our lives are kept in the palm of his hand. ... We can trust him to see us through whatever we face as well. Even though the outcome may not be as clean as Daniel's, God is still faithful in all ways.” (Emphasis added)

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Daniel 6:1-17](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the ways Daniel was faithful and loyal to God. (See #2 above)
3. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about the account of Daniel in the lions' den. (See #3 through #5 above)
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's observations about the dangers of misinterpreting biblical accounts like this one. (See #6 and #7 above)
5. How have you been harmed by the jealousy of others? (See #8 through #13 above)
6. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the way jealousy is destructive to the one who has it and the one who is the target of it. (See #14 above)
7. Read and discuss [Romans 13:13-14](#), [1 Corinthians 3:3](#) and [Galatians 5:19-20](#).
8. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about the ways Daniel maintained his integrity no matter what was going on around him. (See #16 through #18)

9. Read and discuss [Proverbs 10:9](#), [Proverbs 11:3](#), and [Proverbs 20:7](#).
10. Read and discuss [Daniel 6:14, 16a, 18-23](#). (See #19 and #24 above)
11. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's observations about the loyalty and friendship of King Darius toward Daniel. (See #21 through #23 above)
12. Have you had the blessing of a loyal friend in times of difficulty?
13. Read and discuss [Daniel 6:25-28](#). (See #26 above)
14. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about what we can expect God to do in our times of trial and difficulty. (See #27 above)
15. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.