

Daniel
In the Lion's Den (Part 2)
Daniel 6
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Well we are studying together perhaps the most famous story in the Bible; the story of Daniel in a lion's den. I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Daniel 6. You know, as we think about this chapter, and the major players in it, it's important to remember that in ancient Babylon, the lion was pervasive. It served as a constant symbol of that great empire. In fact, as I have noted for you before, that major gate that led into the city, the famous Ishtar Gate, it has been reconstructed from ruins, and is on display in Berlin. And on that great gate there are, in fact, lions. The lion was also important in the Persian Empire that followed. In fact, the Persian kings, including Cyrus the Great, often had the symbol of a lion somehow affixed to their thrones and even to their royal garments. The reason for that is obvious, the lion is the king of beasts and therefore, very much appropriate for kings.

Historically the lions of that part of the world are called Asiatic lions. They are huge, powerful animals. In fact, the males average about six and a half feet long, just the body, and the tails extend another three feet so they are somewhere typically between nine and ten feet long. They stand, and this is shocking, almost four feet at the shoulder. Their average weight is between 350-420 pounds. One man claims to have captured a lion in the 1620's that measured ten feet and weighed 675 pounds. The Asiatic lion used to inhabit the areas of Israel, Arabia, and Mesopotamia, where our story unfolds. It still lived in the upper Euphrates river valley in the early 1870's. Sadly, by the end of the 19th century, the Asiatic lion had become extinct in this region. The last known lion in what is modern Iraq where our story unfolds was killed on the lower Tigris in 1918. But it is these lions, keep in mind, that figure prominently in our story. They are major actors in the scene that unfolds in Daniel 6.

Now the primary message of Daniel 6, as we noted for you last time is this: God is sovereign over the persecution of his people even when it comes through the malicious use of unjust laws. I noted for you that this chapter really parallels chapter 3 in that both of them deal with God's sovereignty over persecution. But they're different in this way: in chapter 3, the persecution that comes against God's people, comes from the capricious decision of a powerful ruler, but here in chapter 6, the persecution comes in a much more subtle way. It comes from the calculating, deceptive use of law to persecute God's people. This is a common approach of the enemies of God and it's becoming increasingly common in our world and even in our culture.

Now, Daniel begins in this passage, and I am not going to reread the first half of the chapter through verse 15, we looked at it last time. Let me just recap it for you. Daniel begins by identifying two common causes of judicial persecution. That is, the malicious intentional use of

law to persecute God's people. There are many reasons such persecution can come, but Daniel here touches on two that are extremely common and you see them in this chapter.

First of all, jealousy over the success of God's people. As Daniel rises to the top and Darius considers making him, not just one of three commissioners who rule under him over all the empire, but the one who rules under him, jealousy builds because of his success. And his success is born obviously by the sovereignty and providence of God, but also by his character, who he was.

A second common cause of judicial persecution also comes in the first five verses, it's resentment over the integrity of God's people. They frankly, find themselves thwarted by their attempts to find something to attack Daniel on because of his integrity, because of his character. They couldn't find anything, no corruption, no negligence in his duties. And so ultimately they settle on the only thing they can find, which is to somehow attack him in reference to his God. Persecution comes against God's people, including judicial persecution for these same reasons. Jealousy over the blessing and success God brings, and resentment over the integrity that we display. Because it rebukes their own. It confronts their own sin, and so, therefore, they resent it.

So, that's where he begins, two common causes of judicial persecution. Secondly, we noted last time in verses 6-9, the malicious use of judicial persecution. The two other commissioners and several of the satraps, proposed a law that was aimed solely at attacking God's people, at attacking Daniel. For 30 days, the law said, Darius was to be the sole priest and mediator between the people and the gods. They likely sold it to Darius as this being a great test of the people's loyalty to him, the new king, and to his new regime. Those who break the law would face a fearsome and gruesome fate. They were to be cast alive into the lion's den.

Without question, this was an intentionally malicious use of the legal process to attack God's people. Sadly, this is becoming increasingly common in the world at large, and especially we can see it unfolding in our country. Because of the rule of law, there isn't the capacity to sort of, in some capricious way, attack the people of God, so it has to be done through the guise of legality and the legal system.

Next, Daniel shows us the believer's response to judicial persecution. Look at verse 10, "Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day [as he had learned from David], praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously." For his entire life in Babylon this had been Daniel's practice, and he simply continues. Even though the law is only for 30 days, he doesn't hide, he doesn't change his routine, he doesn't go to an inner room, I think, as a testimony to those he knew were watching. The lesson we learn from Daniel in verse 10 is this: when government laws demand what God forbids, or forbid what God demands, we are required before God to respectfully, graciously,

disobey the law, in order to obey God, and then, we must patiently suffer the consequences. There's no place among the people of God for violent rebellion. We must do quietly what God requires and suffer the consequences. That's what the apostles did in Acts 4 and Acts 5, when in Acts 5:29, Peter and the apostles said to the Sanhedrin, "We must obey God rather than men."

In verses 11-15, this is where we ended last time, we saw the relentless enforcement of judicial persecution. There is a relentlessness in the effort of these men, and in their relentlessness you see the hatred that most people have for just other people in general, but especially for believers. But Darius had developed a love and appreciation for Daniel and he was troubled. Verse 14, "As soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and he set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him." He now understood the devious purpose behind this law that had been proposed. He realized that he was being used. And he determined to find the legal loophole to deliver Daniel from what would undoubtedly be a certain death. So from noon, likely when they saw and witnessed Daniel praying, until sunset, the King of Persia frantically tried to save Daniel, but he found no loopholes. And the vultures began to sense their prey. Verse 15, "Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, 'Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and the Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed.'" They were enjoying their success. Their devious plan for the judicial persecution of God's prophet, had come together perfectly. But that's not where the story ends. That's where we left off last time, but it's absolutely not where the story ends.

Tonight, we finish the story with a lesson about God's unlimited power over judicial persecution. That's the message of verses 16-28. God's unlimited power over judicial persecution. So far, we have seen man's hatred of God's people. We have witnessed just how far they will go to attack those who entrust themselves to the true and living God. And now we get to see something else. Now we get to witness firsthand the power of God when He steps in, either to rescue or to vindicate His own. Now this section begins, by reminding us that our hope must never be in people, but always in God alone. And the reason for that is because of man's helplessness to rescue us. This is the message in verses 16-18.

Notice verse 16, "Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lion's den." Having exhausted all options to save Daniel, the king was forced to give the order for his execution. He sent his men to arrest Daniel, to bring him back to the lion's den which was likely outside the city and to throw him in the opening at the top, either of a natural cave or of a man-made cavern. The story makes it clear that the king was already there. And either just before Daniel was thrown in, likely, or possibly immediately following, verse 16, "The king spoke and said to Daniel, 'Your God, whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.'" Now, there's a little bit of lack of clarity here. In Aramaic, the statement could be a wish or a prayer. This is what I wish, this is what I hope or it could be a prediction of what would, in fact, happen, which

is how the NAS is taking it here. Now, it could be some of both, but clearly, the king was not totally confident that Daniel would be delivered. We know that because he comes anxious the next morning. Verse 20 tells us that the next morning, "he cried out with a troubled voice." At the same time, he clearly hoped that God would rescue Daniel, and let's just admit that that alone is a remarkable thing. The fact that he believed, think about this now, the fact that the King of Persia believed it was even possible for Daniel to be rescued from the lion's den, shows that he had come to believe in the existence of YHWH. He had undoubtedly heard enough from Daniel about the miracles that God had performed, that he could hope in Israel's God.

Also, don't miss the testimony of Darius to the commitment of Daniel to his God. Notice how he describes Him, he says, "Your God, whom you constantly serve." Oh, that the unbelievers around us in school, and at work, and other places, would have that testimony about us. "Your God, whom you constantly serve." Understand this, the most powerful witness for our Lord is a consistent life. Not to say we shouldn't open our mouths and share the Gospel, we must, as we learned this morning, but the message finds its foundation in a consistent life. "Your God, whom you constantly serve."

Verse 17, "A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing could be changed in regard to Daniel." So, understand the picture here, Daniel was thrown into the lion's den from an opening of some kind at its top. And then a large stone is brought and placed over that top entrance to the lion's den. And either clay was placed where that stone met the rock roof of the den or perhaps a chord was stretched across the rock and clay placed on each end. Then the king took his own signet ring, which was unique to him, no one else would have a copy, and he imprinted that signet ring's mark in the clay. In addition, we are told his nobles, likely, including at least the two other commissioners that served alongside Daniel, they also used their signet rings to imprint the clay. Once that clay hardened, if someone wanted to rescue Daniel, they had to break the seals, and that would incur the wrath of both the king and the nobles. And, for the stone to be removed and Daniel freed legally would require the approval of both the king and these nobles who stamped it with their signet ring. Verse 17 ends, "so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel."

His fate was literally sealed. Verse 18, "Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him." Again, we just see the impact of Daniel's righteous, faithful, gracious life on one of the greatest kings of history. Darius so admired Daniel that when he returned to his palace, he fasted. Then, and now, in ancient Mesopotamia, the main meal of the day was in the late evening. That night he didn't eat. He fasted, ironically, he and the lions. By fasting, it probably is meant to imply, he also prayed. And in light of his comments, both before and after this event, it's very possible, he actually expressed his prayer to Daniel's God. To the real true and living God. Now, we're told that, "no entertainment was brought before

him." The Aramaic word for *entertainment* is kind of a vague word, it refers to a variety of amusements that could be brought before the king, including anything from musical instruments and performers to dancers to concubines.

Verse 18, "and his sleep fled from him." It's interesting, that word *fled* is used in other places of *physical flight*. It's a really powerful word picture, some of you have experienced this, the idea is sleep flew away. It left him entirely, he was completely unable to sleep. Likely, he was feeling ashamed and guilty for giving in to flattery and becoming a party to this evil plot. He undoubtedly was thinking about, I mean wouldn't you? He's thinking about what's happening to poor Daniel in that lion's den. He's thinking about the futility of his own efforts that afternoon; what else could I have done to save this innocent man? He's thinking about the deceptiveness of the conspirators and undoubtedly getting increasingly angered by what they had done and how they had used him. He's thinking of his own stupidity and how he's been taken in and duped through all of this. And I am sure, he's thinking about how he will retaliate when all of this is over. He just can't sleep.

Now, does anything strike you as strange about what we're seeing here? It does me. Profoundly. Because remember, Daniel wrote this chapter. It's called *Daniel in the Lion's Den*. He was a firsthand witness of all that happened that night in the lion's den. But his report about what happened to him is very unsatisfying. Look at verse 22, this is it, the first half of verse 22, this is all he has to say, "My God sent His angel and shut the lion's mouth and they have not harmed me." Now, think about this. In the key part of this chapter about one of the most famous incidents in Scripture, Daniel refuses to allow us to spend the night with him in the lion's den knowing what happened there, instead, we spend the night with the king in his palace and his difficult night. Why is that? Why is the focus there? Well, I think and others have concluded as well, it's to show us that King Darius was completely helpless to deliver Daniel. I mean, think about what's unfolded already. In verse 12, he's naive, he's easily deceived with flattery. In verse 14, and verses 16-20, he's totally unable to find a way to save Daniel from his own law. I think the simple moral of this part of the story is this: do not trust in princes or in man.

Here's how Scripture puts it, Psalm 108:12, "Oh give us help against the adversary, [talking to God], For deliverance by man is in vain." Psalm 118:8-9,

It is better to take refuge in the Lord
Than to trust in man.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord
Than to trust in princes.

Isaiah 2:22, "Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed?" Here's the point; remember that God's people are in Babylon, now having been taken

over by Persia, and with Cyrus in control, things are going pretty well. We haven't talked about it yet, but they have already been sent or will be shortly, the children of Israel, back to the land of Israel to resettle the land. Here's a ruler that's for them. But even when rulers like us, Christians get this in your mind. Even when rulers like us, and when they say they want to help us, they can still be completely helpless. In fact, in verse 16, Darius admits that only God can help.

Dale Ralph Davis writes this, and this is what he says Daniel is trying to get into the minds of the children of Israel, "You may rulers or others in high places, who are well-disposed towards you, but don't rest in them as your trump card [pardon the pun]. For even they, for all their apparent power, can prove as helpless as Samson without hair". The bottom line is, Jonah was right in Jonah 2:9, "Salvation is from the Lord." Or as we sang tonight, "The Lord is our salvation."

I love the way Matthew Henry puts it, commenting on another text, he says this,

"We must repose an entire confidence in the wisdom, power and goodness of God. Assuring ourselves of the extent of His providence to all the creatures and all their actions. We must, therefore, trust in the Lord with all our hearts [this is obviously Proverbs 3:5-6]. We must believe that He is able to do what He will, wise to do what is best, and good, according to His promise to do what is best for us if we love Him and serve Him. We must, with an entire submission and satisfaction, depend upon him to perform all things for us and not lean to our own understanding, as if we could, by any forecast of our own without God, help ourselves, and bring our affairs to a good issue. [And then he finishes this way], Those who note themselves, cannot but find their own understanding to be a broken reed, which if they lean to, will certainly fail them. In all our conduct, we must be diffident of our own judgment, and confident of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, and therefore, must follow providence, and not force it. That often proves best, which was least, our own doing."

This is the message that we learn, even from Daniel.

Now, having shown us man's complete helplessness to rescue, Daniel reminds us of God's unlimited power to act, of God's vindication of His people, in verses 19-24. Look at verse 19, "Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lion's den." Since the king couldn't sleep, as soon as it was dawn, the idea here is really at the very break of day, he, "went in haste". Whatever *haste* means for a powerful Persian monarch, "to the lion's den." Verse 20, "When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?'"

Now, Darius' rush to the lion's den, shows that he was, at least, hopeful that Daniel may have survived the night. His troubled voice shows that while hopeful, he thought it was pretty unlikely. But again, notice how he refers to Daniel here, he calls him, "servant of the living God... whom you constantly serve." More importantly, notice how he refers to God, "the living God." Undoubtedly, he had heard that from Daniel, and in one sense, maybe he's just copying that, as sort of words that Daniel has used to describe his God, but I think it's more than that. He says it now several times, I think he has begun to embrace that reality. I believe Darius was convinced that YHWH actually existed, that He was alive. That doesn't mean necessarily that he had become a believer, although I think that may be possible. But look at the next two verses. The next two verses in our text are absolutely crucial. Because this is the only time in this entire chapter that Daniel speaks.

Verse 21, "Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever!" Now, you know, when you read the Bible, I've told you before, as my father used to say, read it with a sanctified imagination. The guy is in a lion's den. He survived the entire night, the king comes and says, "Daniel, are you still alive?" What would have been your first response? Probably not, "O king, live forever!" Even from the lion's den, Daniel is faithful to the One who is over him. He addressed the king with the proper formal greeting. As one commentator writes, "He thus displayed his willingness to be subject to this man even though Darius had been instrumental in his being in the den." Think about that. He knew the law came from Darius, and yet, he still treats him with respect.

Verse 22, "My God [and in the Aramaic, *My God* is intentionally emphatic; *My God*], sent His angel and shut the lion's mouths and they have not harmed me." He says *My God*, not the gods Babylon, *My God* has personally intervened. He has shut the lion's mouths, and He has protected me from their claws. They had been completely incapacitated the entire night. Not only was Daniel not dead, but he was completely unharmed. How did this happen? Notice how he describes it, "My God sent His angel." Now, it's possible this was just an angel, if you can say, just an angel, that sounds a little contradictory, but it's possible this was just an angel. But more likely, this was the angel of the Lord. That Old Testament character, that mysterious character in the Old Testament, who was a manifestation of the second person of the Trinity. He was Jesus Christ, before His incarnation. Before He was Jesus, the human being and Messiah on the planet. This was the second eternal person of the Trinity, the same person who had walked in the fiery furnace with Daniel's three friends some 50 years earlier in chapter 3. And apparently, Daniel actually saw this angel throughout the night, since he's sure that that's how he was protected. God sent his angel, that implies, He was there. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine how comforting it was for Daniel to spend the entire night in the company of and in fellowship with, the eternal Son of God? With the very Messiah that he will write about in chapter 9.

Verse 22, "inasmuch as [here's why], I was found innocent before Him." Now, don't misunderstand, Daniel is not claiming to be sinless. In fact, in chapter 9, verse 3 he admits his own sin. It just means that he was innocent before God of disloyalty against the king; and, therefore, God spared his life. Now, folks this is not a promise that if you're innocent before God, He will always deliver you from persecution and trouble. It's not that kind of promise. I mean, think about it, he has often failed to do so, by His own plan and purpose. Think about the prophets of the Old Testament; Jesus describes them this way in Matthew 23:35, he describes them as, "the righteous whose blood was shed on the earth." God knew they were innocent, and yet God allowed their righteous blood to be shed. Think about Christ Himself, although perfectly innocent, God chose not to deliver Him from unjust suffering and death. He hasn't promised to do that for any of us. So don't imagine that because you don't deserve it, that God isn't going to allow you or me to suffer at the hands of unjust and godless men and women. Daniel simply means, that in his case, at this time, God had chosen to spare his life because he was found innocent before Him. Verse 22, "and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime." Daniel insists that the reason his life was spared, is that God had chosen to vindicate him of the false accusations that had been made against him.

It is true, he broke the law in praying when he was told not to in order to remain loyal to his God. But he had never been disloyal to the king, he had never disrespected him as he had been accused. Verse 23, "Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den." I think it's impossible to fully appreciate the joy and delight in the king's heart when he knew that he could well have been, through his foolishness and through his pride, the reason for Daniel's innocent death. He commands him to be removed from the lion's den; verse 23 goes on to say, "So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him." Again, you can imagine what happened. As he's brought up out of the den, undoubtedly, the king had his servants inspect Daniel to see if he needed to call for the royal physicians. And they're amazed to discover that he was completely untouched. Not so much as a single scratch.

What was the reason for this miraculous deliverance? Verse 23 ends with, "because he had trusted in his God." Now, if you are familiar with the New Testament at all, your mind goes to one text: in Hebrews chapter 11, where it says, "By faith... some... shut the mouths of lions." Because he trusted in his God.

Now, the story transitions, understandably, because if you go back to the night while the king is in his palace, he undoubtedly had spent some of that sleepless night, plotting retaliation against those that had deceived him and used him against Daniel. It's likely, I think, that he intended to have them thrown into the lion's den, even if Daniel was dead. But now he orders them to be brought, verse 24, "The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously

accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lion's den." Now, to us, that immediately shocks our sensibilities, and it should. Because in Israel, according to God's law in Deuteronomy 24:16, the wives and children of a guilty man were not to be punished. "The soul that sins, it shall die." Unless of course, they were complicit in the crime, as in Joshua 7 with the family of Achan. But Herodotus, the Greek historian, tells us that Persian law called for the punishment of the entire family of the guilty. A cruel law, but undoubtedly a law intended to prevent the future retaliation of living family members. It's fascinating how their crime is described in verse 24, look at how it's put there, "maliciously accused Daniel." Let me read it to you literally from the Aramaic, "They brought those men who had eaten in pieces Daniel." There's a great irony. There is a powerful figure of speech that captures the viciousness of their false accusations and at the same shows how God brought their own scheme, pardon the pun, back to bite them.

Now, in case you are tempted to think that this was a miracle with no teeth because the lions were old or fat or just well fed, look at verse 24. When they threw these people in, "they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones." As Darius' soldiers arrived at the den, probably a trickle, because they had to go to different places in the city to arrest these people. They arrived at the den with the conspirators and their families, they throw them into the mouth of the den one by one and in each case the lions caught them in mid air before their bodies even reached the floor of the lion's den. They overpowered them, they devoured them, they ate their flesh and they even crushed all their bones. There was literally nothing for the keepers of the den to clean. That only serves to prove the incredible miracle that Daniel had survived an entire night without a scratch.

You see, God intervened. God has unlimited power to intervene when it comes to the persecution of his people. And, let me say it this way, God always, always vindicates his people. It may not be in this life, and it often isn't. You know we love that part of Hebrews that says, in fact, turn there with me for a moment. Look at Hebrews chapter 11, and look at verse 32,

And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith [now watch this, who by faith] conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; [wow, that's faith! But watch this, verse 35 goes on to say], and others [and others, by faith] were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in

sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. [Verse 39] And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

They all gained God's approval of their faith. Some, but others. You see God doesn't always choose to vindicate his people in this life, but he always vindicates them. For some, that vindication only comes in eternity. You understand a day will come when every intelligent being in the universe will stand before God and God's people, who on this earth, were maligned and falsely accused and attacked will be utterly and completely vindicated by the mouth of God Himself. "These are my people, and they were right!"

Daniel and the lion's den remind us, not that God always will protect us from, and always will save us out, of judicial persecution, sometimes He does, but that He can. And if He chooses to, He can even intervene miraculously. And regardless, He will always eventually vindicate His people. I love the way Isaiah puts it in Isaiah 54:15-17,

If anyone fiercely assails you it will not be from Me. Whoever assails you will fall because of you. Behold, I Myself have created the smith who blows the fire of coals And brings out a weapon for its work; And I have created the destroyer to ruin. No weapon that is formed against you will prosper [this isn't a promise for all men in all times, this is God's capacity, His ability and His promise in this specific context]; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. [And here's what I want you to see, it may not happen in this life, but notice this]. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their vindication is from Me, says the Lord.

It will come. Sometimes, as promised, here in this life, other times, in eternity.

Let's go back to Daniel chapter 6. We've seen man's helplessness to rescue. We've seen God's vindication of His people in verses 19-24. Now, notice, God's vindication of His name as He expresses His unlimited power over judicial persecution. We see His vindication of His name in verses 25-27. Darius was so awe-struck by the miracle, that he issued a public decree. Verse 25, "Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land [that is, in the entire empire]: 'May your peace abound!'" This reminds us of Nebuchadnezzar, back in Babylon earlier, chapter 2 and chapter 4. Verse 26, "I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel." Darius demands that all the citizens of his kingdom, fear and tremble, before God, why?

Notice there are several compelling reasons given in this decree.

Because he's real, verse 26, "He is the living God."

Because he's eternal, he goes on to say in verse 26, "For He is the living God and enduring forever," He's always God.

He is the living, eternal, sovereign one, notice verse 26, "And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion will be forever."

And in verse 27, He is the savior of His people. "he delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders In heaven and on earth." That refers to miracles, he can do miracles to intervene for His people who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

This decree reminds us that God often displays His power and His miracles to demonstrate that He is the true and living God and to direct fallen mankind to look to Him for salvation. This was why He showed, in part, His miracles in Egypt. In Exodus 9:15-16, God says to Pharaoh,

If by now, [I love this, if by now] I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. [He says listen, I am not trying to destroy you. If I was trying to destroy you, it would have already happened]. But indeed for this reason, I have allowed you to remain in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name, [My character, My existence] throughout all the earth.

I love Psalm 138:4-5

All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O YHWH,
When they have heard the words of Your mouth.
And they will sing of the ways of YHWH,
For great is the glory of YHWH.

This is what God is often about. Now look at the last verse of Daniel chapter 6. "So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." "Enjoyed success," probably includes promotion. Promotion to the second highest position in Persia under Darius, which he was already remember considering doing. It included, undoubtedly, his being honored by the people. This decree makes that clear. And it also likely included material and financial prosperity. And he says, he "enjoyed the success," notice the end of verse 28, "in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."

As I noted for you last time, Darius may be a governor that was appointed over the old Babylonian empire by Cyrus, or it may be actually Cyrus, in which case, verse 28 would read, "the reign of Darius, *even* the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Simply two different names for the same man; one a Median name and the other a Persian name.

Now, we don't know exactly how long Daniel lived. We're told here he enjoyed success during that reign. We know that he survived, at least, until the third year of Darius. That's mentioned in chapter 10, verse 3, which would have been the year 536 B.C. and Daniel would have been 84 years old. You know what encourages me? Is that Daniel was faithful to his God. He was faithful when he was essentially alone, away from his family, away from his homeland. He was in the worst of circumstances. He was maliciously attacked. He was persecuted relentlessly, but he was faithful. And I love this, he was faithful in old age, and even until his death, he finished well.

This week I was reading some portions of the Old Testament and was reminded again that there are many there who were very successful. Who were faithful and enjoyed great prosperity under the hand of the Lord until they were older. And they didn't end well. Uzziah is a great example; 2 Chronicles 26 says, He was marvelously helped until he was strong. And then his heart was lifted up within him and he began to assert himself in a position that wasn't his. And God struck him with leprosy and that's how his story ended. After 50 years reigning as king. Many don't end well, but Daniel did. And he gives us a reminder and example, that by God's grace we can as well. May God allow us, like Daniel, to be faithful, even to the end. In Jesus' name we pray this, Amen.

Let's pray together. Our Father, we do thank You for the amazing story that we have seen unfold before us tonight. We thank You for the reminder that though Satan and Your enemies, fallen men and women, will attack us because they hate You. And they will even use the legal system, we see it unfolding even now in our country. Father, remind us that "Greater is He that is in us, then He that is in the world." Remind us that You have unlimited power to intervene. You don't always intervene in a way that protects us or keeps us from suffering the consequences, but Father we bless You and we thank You that we can count on your justice. That we will be vindicated in the end. That some day the entire universe will know that we loved You, and we served You, that we were Your own. That You Yourself, will declare us to be innocent of the malicious accusations that have been leveled against us. Father, I pray that You would help Us to trust in You. Whatever comes, Lord our world, our country, they're in desperate shape, but we thank You that You are on Your throne. Our hope is not in man, our hope is not in princes, but our hope is in You. Father, we thank You that there is coming a day, when there will be a stone, cut out of a mountain without hands, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself who will crush the kingdoms of this world. And His kingdom will be forever. We long for that day, until then, Lord like Daniel, keep us faithful in a foreign land. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

