

*“The Confident Courage of a Blameless Life”*

Daniel 6

June 14, 2020

Turn with me to Daniel 6, where we will see our extraordinary God intervene in the extraordinary times of Daniel. But I want to begin by way of introduction in Psalm 34. Psalm 34 contains an encouraging life principle that we will see illustrated in Daniel 6. The context in which we find this life principle is the Psalmist’s exhortation to walk in the fear of God because *the reward of walking in the fear of God is the blessing of walking in the favor of God.*

But how do we do that? Well, walking in the fear of God is taking a hard turn away from anything that displeases God and pursuing that which is pleasing in God’s sight. For example, “keep your tongue from evil...depart from evil and do good” (Ps 34:13-14). And the incentive for living a life free from sin in the fear of the Lord is that “the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (34:15-16). In other words, the fear of God leads to the favor of God, where as a life of sin results in God’s judgment.

Then the Psalmist declares this stunning life principle: “*The righteous cry, and the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles....Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all*” (Ps. 34:17, 19). This doesn’t mean that every prayer will be answered with an immediate, miraculous deliverance. But it does mean that no affliction will ultimately withstand God’s hand of deliverance. Even some afflictions which may cling to you until your death bed, will be shattered by the great deliverance that death is to the believer. The point of Ps 34:19 is this: *When we survey the lives of those who trust the Lord and walk uprightly, we discover that the overwhelming pattern of their lives is a series of countless interventions of God’s provision and deliverance.*

By the time we get to the events of Daniel 6, Daniel is now an old man and his life has been one of consistently walking in the fear of God and experiencing the favor of God in the face of countless temptations and trials. And what we are about to see illustrated in chapter 6 is that:

- “The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil to cut off the memory of them from the earth” (Ps 34:15-16).
- “The righteous cry, and the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles” (Ps. 34:17).

Daniel 6 opens by expounding on the uncompromising character of Daniel.

### **Uncompromising Character** (Daniel 6:1-9)

**[vs. 1-9]** Daniel stood out. His wisdom, skillful leadership, and integrity caused him to be distinguished above all the Babylonian leaders as having an extraordinary spirit. This extraordinary spirit is the result of two things: God’s favor on Daniel and Daniel’s faithfulness to God. So impressive was Daniel’s ability, that King Darius intended to put Daniel in charge of the entire kingdom. This of course provoked jealousy in Daniel’s fellow commissioners.

But when they sought to find some way to discredit Daniel, they came up short. Vss. 5-6 tell us emphatically that they could find no ground of accusation against Daniel, no corruption, and no negligence regarding his public, professional life. So they began to probe deeper into his personal life and even his spiritual life only to discover unrelenting integrity. So they concluded the only way to discredit Daniel was to set him up (trap him) by creating a conflict between his loyalty to king Darius and His loyalty to God, knowing that Daniel would certainly remain loyal to his God at all cost.

Take note of Daniel’s transparency. Those who were closest to Daniel, who examined him with the most critical scrutiny, knew that he would be unwavering in his loyalty to God. He would not compromise for even 30 days though it cost him his life. When they could not make an accusation of wrongdoing, the only way to get rid of Daniel was to set a trap whereby they could accuse him of doing what was right with respect to his God.

Actually, their plan was very clever. Not only would it flatter king Darius to be the only one people could bow down to or petition for 30 days, it was also a great way to establish his sovereignty over the newly expanded

Persian kingdom that had just swallowed up Babylon. Thirty days of sole allegiance to Darius or death by lions!

Yet Daniel not only had uncompromising character, he also had uncompromising devotion to God. (Devotion to God was the backbone of his character)

### **Uncompromising Devotion** (Daniel 6:10-15)

**[vs. 10-15]** Vs. 10 gives us incredible insight into what kind of man Daniel was. He was an unrelenting lover of God. He hadn't spent his life walking in the fear of God to be tripped up now by the schemes of ruthless men. With anchored confidence in God, he courageously flings open the windows and kneels to pray and worship. Why? Because this is what he always did out of habit and conviction. He knows the government order had been decreed. He knows its irrevocable. He knows that to disobey is capital punishment—being thrown as live bait to the lions. But Daniel has undaunting courage born out of his trust in God.

Furthermore, he is a man of prayer. Not just when crisis arises. Notice in vs. 10 he continued praying 3 times a day “as he had been doing previously.” Daniel is a man of spiritual discipline and he has been his whole life. Daniel is an elderly man, possibly even in his early 80's by now, and he's served in the highest places of government without sacrificing his integrity in the slightest. And now in this crisis he turns to his prayer fellowship with God—the same “prayer-fellowship with Yahweh that had safeguarded Daniel from the corrupting influences of Babylonian culture” all these years.<sup>1</sup>

What do you think Daniel was praying for?

- Was he praying for God to deliver him from the schemes of ruthless men and the lion's den? Possibly.
- Was he praying for God to strengthen his faith and keep him faithful in the face of death? Probably.
- But there was probably something else he was praying for. Daniel's vision was much bigger than the circumstances of his own life. We actually have a record of one of Daniel's prayers in chapter 9 where

Daniel is pleading with God to restore His people. In fact, Daniel is confessing the sins Israel and pleading with God to forgive them for sake of His own glory. He concludes his prayer this way: “O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name” (9:19).

What city? Jerusalem. The very city toward which Daniel opens his windows to pray, according to 1 Kings 8:47 where Solomon had prayed, “*if they take thought in the land where they have been taken captive, and repent and make supplication to You in the land of those who have taken them captive, saying, 'We have sinned and have committed iniquity, we have acted wickedly'; if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who have taken them captive, and pray to You toward their land which You have given to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name; then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven Your dwelling place, and maintain their cause, and forgive Your people who have sinned against You.*”

Daniel's prayer is a fulfillment of Solomon's prayer. Furthermore, we know from 9:2 that Daniel's prayer was also inspired by his study of Jeremiah. *Daniel's prayer life was driven by his study of Scripture.* By the way, we know that Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 and the events of chapter 6 were all within the first year of Darius's reign (9:1-2). So when Daniel opens the windows to pray, it is not done in a spirit of defiance to Darius, but in a spirit of faithfulness to God and the Scriptures. I think we find further evidence that Daniel is *respectfully* disobeying King Darius in the king's response to the situation. Darius apparently respects Daniel because he is “deeply distressed” when he discovers what has happened and “kept exerting himself to rescue him” (14). In fact, as we are about to see, Daniel's life and witness before King Darius has given Darius some level of hope that Daniel's God will deliver him.

### **Unhindered Favor from the Unrivaled Deliverer** (Daniel 9:16-24)

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<sup>1</sup> Gleason Archer, Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 7: Daniel. Pg. 79.

**[vs. 16-24]** There's an important theme that we must not overlook in these verses. In vs. 16 as Daniel is thrown to the lions, Darius says to him, "*Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.*" The next morning, Darius runs to the den and cries out, "*Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?*" The question he's asking is, "Has the God to whom you have been faithful, also been faithful to you?"

The answer comes in vs. 22-23. God was both able and faithful to protect and deliver Daniel. He shut the lion's mouths so that Daniel suffered no injury whatsoever. This miraculous deliverance affirms Daniel's innocence before both God and men in vs. 22, and it validates Daniel's faith in vs. 23: "no injury was found on him *because he had trusted in his God.*"

Take note that God protected Daniel, God delivered Daniel, and then in vs. 24 God vindicated Daniel with justice as those who had plotted to take his life were themselves tossed to the lions. **[Ps 34:15-16]**

King Darius was so impressed with the power of Daniel's God to deliver, that he ascribed public praise to Daniel's God.

#### **Unbounded Praise to the Sovereign Lord** (Daniel 6:25-28)

Speaking better than he knew, King Darius declared that Israel's God is the living God, the eternal God, whose dominion is eternal and indestructible.

Step back for a moment and think about how encouraging the book of Daniel must have been to God's people in a time when they lived under the dominance of pagan nations. The book of Daniel testifies to a number of essential truths<sup>2</sup>:

1. *It's possible to live a faithful life of obedience to God in a pagan and hostile world.* You don't have to bow to the culture.
2. *God is more than able to deliver and vindicate those who trust in Him.* God will oppose the proud and give grace to the humble.

3. *God is sovereign over the course of history and human powers.* No person or nation can usurp God's reign or thwart His plan.
4. *God's kingdom will endure and overcome, regardless of how things look now.*

So what should we take away from Daniel 6 for today? Daniel had to make a choice between walking in the fear of God or succumbing to the fear of man—a choice that we often have to make as well. The reward of walking in the fear of God is the blessing of walking in the favor of God—but the decision becomes more difficult when the favor of God is accompanied by persecution from the world. We would be wise to keep Proverbs 29:25 in mind: "*The fear of man brings a snare but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted.*" Daniel seemed to understand that the fear of man was a greater snare than the one men had laid for him. In other words, the greatest danger is not what man can do to you; the greatest danger is fearing man at the expense of fearing God and walking in His favor.

Daniel walked in the *fear of God* (as displayed through his upright character) and as a result he enjoyed the *favor of God* (which was manifested through God's faithfulness to him). As Daniel pursued a life of *faithful devotion* to God (based on God's own faithfulness), it set him on a path of *fearless courage* before men that resulted in the *fame of God's name*.

Daniel 6 teaches us that **when the righteous walk faithfully in the fear of God, they can confidently trust in the favor of God to deliver them from the fear of man.** Daniel's greatest deliverance was not from his enemies, but from fearing his enemies. The most important thing in Daniel 6 is not that Daniel's life was spared, but that his faith in God was preserved in the face of death.

We've seen in Daniel uncompromising character and uncompromising devotion to God that *seems* worthy of God's favor. But you may despair, saying, I haven't lived a life of uncompromising character or uncompromising devotion to God that's worthy of God's favor. Beloved, our

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<sup>2</sup> See 1) Jason DeRouchie, *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About*, pg. 408-420, and 2) ESV Study Bible, pg. 1582.

hope is not in trying to attain such a life by our human effort. Our hope is in embracing the One to whom Daniel's life points. Jesus' character and devotion to God were not just uncompromising—they were perfect. And He lived His life, despising the fear of man and perfectly enjoying God's favor, so that He himself could be our deliver through the cross where He would die to clear us of every infraction on our character and devotion to God.

Prayer Challenge: Lord, grant me uncompromising character and devotion to You that honors the favor and faithfulness You have already secured for me in Christ.