



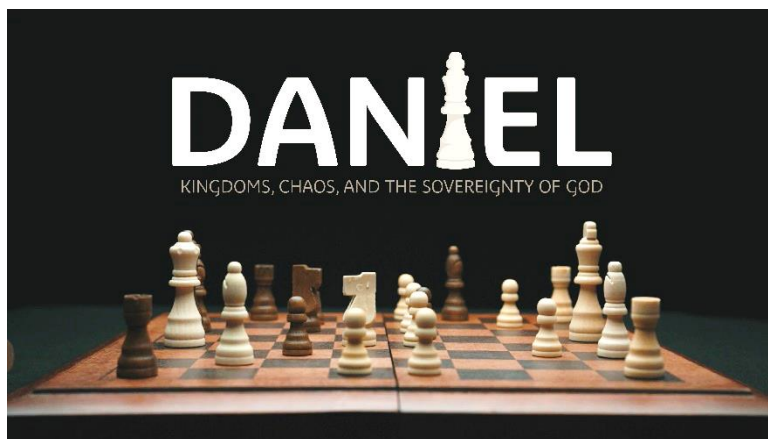
VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

Faith Amidst the Fray!

DANIEL: Kingdoms, Chaos and the Sovereignty of God

Daniel 6

Tim Badal | February 18, 2024



We have been in a series in this book that was written 600 years before the coming of Jesus Christ, written by Daniel in a time and place when God's people were in exile. Because of God's judgment, they were enslaved in a foreign land, having to live a very different life than in their homeland. As a result, they were challenged to find ways to live out their faith amidst the pagan practices going on all around them.

In these five chapters, we have seen how Daniel and some of his friends lived faithfully amidst the fray. In other words, they stood the test of time, they stood when they were in the minority and they were faithful to their God even though the nation they were in worshiped a multitude of gods, bringing great pressure and fear. They have demonstrated to us that we also can live a faithful Christian life amidst the difficulties we encounter today.

In Daniel 6 we come to what is one of the most well known and beloved stories in the Old Testament: Daniel in the lion's den. We'll read it in a moment, but just to give you a broad view of what's going on, Daniel is now an old man, and he has proved since being a teenager that he has been a faithful man, not only to God, but to the people he is serving. Because of this, he has been elevated in different kingdoms, under different kings, to higher places of authority. Now he finds himself under a new king.

If you remember last week, we saw the demise of the Babylonian empire, situated in what is now modern-day Iraq. The king had thrown a great feast at an unusual moment, when his capital city was under siege by the invading Medo-Persian army. Why would a king throw a party at that time? Because he had great confidence in his defense. The capital city of Babylon was defended by a 90-foot wall and a moat around the city that was about 50 feet deep. It would be impossible for an invading army to cross that moat and then find a way to put up ladders to rise 90 feet up the wall.

While the king and his nobles were living it up in that party, which involved drinking and all manner of debauchery, God showed up in a very unique way. He came in the form of a human hand, writing on the wall words that told the king and his guests that their time of ruling the world was over. In fact, that night the king lost his life and the Babylonian empire that had ruled the world for nearly six decades came crashing down.

How did that happen? The Medo-Persians were smarter than the Babylonians. They dammed up the moat, walked on dry land, dug underneath the wall and then walked in unharmed. The only person in this story that we know of in human records is the king. He lost his life, then Medo-Persian empire took over just as Daniel had prophesied years earlier.

Cyrus was the king of Persia and Darius was his general. Darius governed this province for about 12-15 months. His job was to establish the kingdom until the real king could arrive. This is where we find ourselves in Daniel 6. Daniel had been elevated to being a president, a position somewhat like a member of the supreme court. There were three presidents and Daniel was one of them, serving under King Darius. Then there were 120 governors, also called satraps, who ruled the various sections of this land that was once Babylon.

These men did not like the idea that an exile—a slave like Daniel—was in charge of them. So they sought to find something they could hold against him. They looked at his work life, but they found out he was such a good subject of the king and served the empire so well that they couldn't go that route. They then turned to his religion. They put together a plan that the king had to sign off on, and the king decided to accept it. The plan was that for 30 days, no prayers should be prayed except to the king. That sounds weird to us, but it's really no different than for us to pledge allegiance to our flag or to stand when the national anthem is being played. It was a sign of unity and loyalty. The plan only was to last for one month, but for that period of time the people were told to lay down their gods and to only pray to King Darius.

They knew very well that Daniel would not submit to this law. They knew he was faithful to his God, and thus they figured out that this would be his downfall. Once the 30 days began, they watched him closely. Just as he had always done, Daniel continued to pray three times a day to his God. They said to themselves, "We've got him now." They went to the king and said, "Daniel is a traitor to you." Now, the king had said if anyone doesn't conform to the new law they would be cast into a den of lions, where they would be destroyed. That was the death sentence attached to this new law. Daniel's accusers told the king, "This guy who works for you is paying no attention to your laws. He does what he wants to do." But as we'll read in a moment, this grieved the king, because he loved Daniel. But a law was a law and he had to follow through by putting Daniel into the lions' den.

For one evening the king fasted and lamented. Then apparently he had a thought that perhaps the God of Daniel might be all Daniel claimed He was, so there was a little hope that Daniel might possibly survive. At daybreak, the king ran to the lions' den and called out to Daniel. Daniel replied, "I'm here. The lions have done me no harm. My God has protected me." Then those who were involved in the treacherous plot were themselves thrown into the lions' den and suddenly the lions became very hungry. After that, the king worshiped the God of Daniel, elevating Him over all other gods and calling the people to worship Him.

So what are we to do with all this? First of all, this is a reminder for us as believers that we are to remain faithful even in the most difficult times. Our faith is not a fair-weather faith. Our faith isn't just for when the team is doing well. Whether we're in first place or last, we need to stay true to God. We should remember that the Bible gives us many faithful individuals. The disciples who followed Jesus all went to their death holding strong to their faith in God in the face of horrific opposition against them.

As we move out of the biblical realm and into human history, we could create a Mount Rushmore of individuals who lived out their faith amidst the fray. These were people in the ancient world, like Polycarp who lived about a hundred years after Jesus. He lived to be 86 years old and was a disciple of the Apostle John. He loved Jesus so much and was faithful to Him. But the Roman empire had decreed that Caesar alone could be called lord. Those who would not say "Caesar is lord" would be put to death. Polycarp of course refused to say that, so he was taken into the Colosseum, tied to a post and a fire was about to consume him. But just before he was burned alive, the soldiers pleaded with him to change his mind. "Just whisper to us that Caesar is lord and we'll let you live." He replied, "I've followed Jesus for 86 years and He had done me no wrong. Why would I give up on Him now?" So he was burned at the stake.

I think of William Tyndale. For you holding a Bible, whether on your phone or in your hand, if you can read it in English, it's because of William Tyndale. About 1,500 years after Jesus Christ, he had a burden for his English brothers to be able to read the Bible in their language. The Roman Catholic church struggled with this. They wanted the Bible to remain in Latin. They were afraid that Christianity would change if the Bible was translated into English. But Tyndale believed being able to read the Bible for themselves was the best thing for them, so he did that translation. As a result, he too lost his life.

A little more recent was another man, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor in Nazi Germany. He was the most listened-to individual on the radio other than one other man: Adolf Hitler. He used his sermons to preach against the evils of Nazi Germany, and that cost him his life.

Then finally, most closely to our day is a woman named Elisabeth Elliot. She met her husband Jim at nearby Wheaton College. They believed God was calling them to the mission field in South America, where they went to an unreached people group called the Auca Indians. That tribe was notoriously hostile, warring against their neighboring tribes. But Elisabeth and Jim loved the Aucas, so they and some of their friends began to make contact in order to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the natives. When the men made their first human contact with the Aucas, they were killed. Elisabeth and the other wives became widows at the hands of this hostile tribe. You would have thought they would have said, "They killed our husbands, we've done our duty, we're going home." But they had a faith amidst the fray, amidst the fire. Elisabeth decided to go back to the Aucas, to the very people who had killed her husband and his friends. She preached the gospel and they were converted to Jesus.

If there was a Mount Rushmore of faith, some of these individuals would be on it. Surely Daniel would be one of them, living out his faith. I'm here to ask you this morning, as a follower of Jesus, will you do whatever it takes to stay with Him no matter the cost? No matter what they throw at you, will you say, "I am a follower of Jesus"?

This is what Daniel 6 is all about: a man who loved God more than life itself. So let's look at the text this morning.

¹ It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. ³ Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ Then the presidents 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. ⁵ 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."

⁶ Then these presidents and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! ⁷ All the presidents 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. ⁸ 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." ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

This type of faith involves overcoming worldly pressure and fear.

The first thing we need to see this morning, if we're going to live out our faith like Daniel, is that we need to realize this kind of faith involves overcoming pressure and fear. Daniel's world was already a turbulent one, and now a new administration is in place. What he's going to learn is that the new boss is just like the old boss. Daniel has lived this out under another king. He is aware that being faithful can mean living in opposition to the world around him.

Notice first that we're dealing here with office politics. There is a group of Daniel's coworkers who aren't happy that this foreigner—this slave, this nobody—has been elevated to the second in command. He's risen on the corporate ladder and there's jealousy.

So let me do a quick poll. At your school, or in your workplace, is there jealousy when someone gets something others don't? That happens, right? Jealousy is ripe in our schools and workplaces. Someone gets a promotion. Someone gets a raise. Someone gets accolades from the boss or the teacher. It's not like the rest of us sit there and say, "Wow, it's great to have them in the classroom. Wow, that's great to have them in our workplace." No, for us humanly, it's far easier to become envious of what has happened in that person's life. This is what is going on in our passage today. Daniel is experiencing the jealousy of his coworkers.

Second, the scenario involves Daniel's faith. One of the reasons the others are not happy with him is he's not like them. He doesn't worship their gods. He doesn't participate in their activities. He has distinguished himself from the others, probably as a result of his faith.

So what do we do with this? How do we go about living in a world where we need to overcome worldly pressures and fears? We need to admit that this kind of pressure is hitting us now. For those who work in the public sector, especially in the corporate world, some of the pressure is real. Gone are the days when being a follower of Jesus was a good thing. Maybe some of you are finding that your coworkers are using your faith against you. How should we respond when this happens?

People are watching.

First of all, we need to realize what Daniel knew, which is that people are watching. People are watching how you live life. Your boss is watching you. Your coworkers are watching. Your teachers are watching. Your fellow students are watching. Your neighbors are watching. Your community is watching and they're asking, "What makes you tick? What are your goals? How do you live?"

When you take on the label 'Christian,' that puts you under even greater scrutiny. Now you're claiming to live like Jesus, but are you really living that way? These people said about Daniel, "We can't find anything wrong with him, so the only option we have is to challenge his faith."

We must devote ourselves to living holy lives.

By the way, Ezekiel mentions three men who are more righteous than all the rest. They are Moses, Job and Daniel. If Daniel had problems in this world, even though he was righteous, surely we will have problems as well. Jesus told us we will have trouble in this world (John 16:33). Just because we're followers of Jesus doesn't exempt us from troubles.

So what I want you to see that because we're doing life in a secular world, we must devote ourselves to living holy lives. It's as if Peter was speaking about Daniel 6 when he wrote this in 1 Peter 2:11-12: *"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles...."* What was Daniel? He was a sojourner and an exile." Peter urges us *"to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable."* Who were the Medes and Persians? They were the Gentiles of Daniel's day.

Peter goes on to give us the reason: *"So that when they speak against you as evildoers"*—which was what was happening in Daniel 6—*"they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."* Our job as Christians is to live such upright lives that it's difficult for the evil world around us to do harm or even to speak badly of us.

You might be thinking, "I'm Daniel in my workplace. There's pressure. I'm a Christian and my boss is asking me to do questionable things. Or my coworkers are conspiring against me. I'm Daniel. I'm Daniel. I'm Daniel." Could it be that you're not Daniel at all? Could it be that the reason you're feeling pressure is you're a lousy employee, that you show up to work late, that you don't get along well with others, that you don't do the work you're called to do? Maybe the pressure you're feeling is a godly pressure, so you will do better in your workplace and serve your employer as unto the Lord, as Colossians says. Could it be that the pressure you're feeling is because you're a lousy employee? If that's the case, you need to change for the better.

We do however realize that our faith can actually create problems in our lives and in our workplaces. Jesus said in John 15:18-19, *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."* At times, your faith can put you at a disadvantage in your workplace, in school, in relationships, in the community, all because people aren't fans of Jesus nor of His followers.

We need to realize that what Daniel was experiencing was something very real. But here's what's crazy. Notice the lengths to which his enemies went. This is truly an indication of the heart of human beings. It's deceitfully sick, the Bible says in Jeremiah 17:9), who can understand it? Here's a group of 120 or so people who conspired for days to kill a man in his 80s. That's how much they hated him.

It's not just that they wanted to bring him down professionally; they wanted to bring him down permanently. They wanted him to be thrown to the lions. How much do you have to hate a person to want to see that person ripped limb from limb by ravenous lions in a pit? This is what they were seeking to do to Daniel.

This type of faith involves living productively and faithfully.

This brings us to my second point this morning, which asks the question, how then are we to live amidst that? Maybe you're not in that place in your world, but that means all the more that you should be doing what Daniel did: he lived productively and faithfully.

There are three things in this story I want to call your attention to that Daniel lived out well. He lived well vocationally, he lived out his faith emotionally and he lived out his faith spiritually. Vocationally regarding his job, emotionally in that he responded well to the trials he encountered and spiritually before his God. Remember, Daniel was an old man. He had been serving under various kings for at least 60 years. Now he was having to figure out how to serve and honor God late in life. So notice what we read in Daniel 6:3: *"Then this Daniel became distinguished..."* That is, he excelled in his abilities and integrity." Verse two says the king would suffer no loss. Daniel was an employee who wanted to make sure the king looked good and had whatever he needed.

Then again in verse three it says there was *"an excellent spirit"* in Daniel. He brought the Spirit of God to his workplace. He didn't leave God in his church. He didn't leave God at home. He took God into the cubicle, into the classroom, to the water cooler. Daniel took God into every facet of his life, including his work life. Can that be said of us today? Does our relationship with Jesus Christ begin in the church service and end as we leave the parking lot? Or are we taking our God and His Christ to the workplace

where God has us? Could it be that God has you uniquely positioned so you might be a Daniel in the place you work or go to school?

We see that Daniel is full of integrity in his vocation. He does all things well. He's above reproach in every way. So what happens to him? Let's pick up in Daniel 6:10: *"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."*

Underline that. Nothing had changed in Daniel's prayer routine. The law changed. His circumstances changed. A trial had come into his life. But nothing had changed spiritually because his faith was able to keep his emotions stable. A new law was written specifically with him in mind, but he didn't throw up his hands and claim, "I'm a victim!" He doesn't say, "God, I've served You all these years and this is what You do?" He doesn't say, "My neighbors have it made, but I get all the difficult things."

Humanly speaking, this is how we react. But when Daniel found out he was going to be thrown to the lions, he didn't make a scene. When he realized his death was impending, he was calm and silent. Brothers and sisters, if you want to know what your faith is like amidst the fray, test your emotions. Ask yourself, "How do I respond? Where are my emotions when bad things happen to me?" Daniel kept emotionally calm because he trusted God.

Regarding Daniel's response spiritually, he said to anyone who would listen, "God is my King." How did he show that? He continued to pray in exactly the same way he had always done. We're not sure exactly what got him in trouble. Did they actually hear what he prayed? We do know this:

- His posture: on his knees
- His position: he prayed toward Jerusalem
- His practice: three times each day

In fact, these things are also all recorded in the Psalms. Daniel knew what the psalmist had written about praying and had built his practice around that. It would seem that these enemies knew that wasn't how pagans prayed; they prayed to the sun god, moon god, rain god, harvest god. They prayed altogether differently. So Daniel didn't even have to pray out loud; he just had to go through the motions and they would have judged him for that.

Now in fact, Daniel did not have to do this. He could have thought, "I can pray silently. I can pray in my heart as I'm going through my day; nobody will be the wiser. That will allow me to live within the confines of this law. It only lasts for 30 days." But instead, he basically decided, "I want to be identified as a follower of God, even if that means I will pay for it."

Oh, if we could be people—if your preacher could be a person—who can let life go and dedicate ourselves to this principle that when we have any opportunity to show our allegiance to Jesus Christ, we will do so, regardless of what it might cost.

So what happened to Daniel next? He was taken to the lions' den. The king didn't want this to happen, but here's what we read, beginning in verse 14:

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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."

¹⁶ 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!" ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

The king couldn't do anything but think about Daniel that night. Because Daniel had been open about his faith and may have told the king about how God had delivered him and had delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, could it be that Darius was starting to believe Daniel's God might save him again?

¹⁹ 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?"

I wondered if Daniel stayed quiet, just for effect. *“Then Daniel said to the king, ‘O king, live forever!’”* Daniel blessed the king. How ironic—“Live forever, King, unlike me whom you threw to the lions to die.” But Daniel went on, *“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. 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.

How sad that their wives and children also suffered for the evil done by these men, but that shows how angry the king was. We could stop here and say, “Let’s sing a song to Daniel. He’s the man. He’s the star of this story.” But when we live faithfully amidst the fray, it’s not about us; it’s about God. It’s about the One Who has empowered us and protects us. So the rest of this chapter is all about Daniel’s God, not about him.

This type of faith involves trusting God’s preeminence, now and forever.

This God Who made Daniel, Who led Daniel, Who empowered Daniel, Who protected Daniel is the One we must praise. This reminds us that we’re not doing any of this on our own. Like Daniel, we need to be willing to trust God’s preeminence, not only now, but forever. Notice that what the king did next wasn’t about Daniel at all, but about Daniel’s God.

²⁵ 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.”

Listen to me, church. The reason why we can live faithful lives amidst the fray is not because we have something in ourselves, but because God allows it and God is in it. Yes, we can make Daniel our model, but we make King Jesus our Messiah.

Why was this book written? To remind us that we can stand in the midst of troubled times. We can do this even when all the world is against us. But I also want you to know that this is a picture of King Jesus Who is to come.

I borrowed what I’m about to say from another pastor, but I think it’s brilliant. I want to share with you how Daniel and Jesus are connected, how Jesus is way better than Daniel and why He should be your Savior and Lord. Daniel was looking forward to King Jesus, the One Who saved him from the lions’ den. So here are ten things Daniel and Jesus have in common:

1. Both Daniel and Jesus had political leaders who were jealous, who drummed up false charges to arrest them and kill them.
2. Both Daniel and Jesus were silent before their demise.
3. Both Daniel and Jesus had senior political leaders declare them innocent and faultless.
4. Both Daniel and Jesus had senior political leaders try to spare them the death sentence.
5. Both Daniel’s and Jesus’ bodies were put in a pit covered with a large stone.
6. Both Daniel and Jesus had a stone that was protected with a government seal.
7. Both Daniel and Jesus had loving friends run to their pit early in the morning.
8. Both Daniel and Jesus defeated death and walked away from their would-be tombs early in the morning.
9. Both Daniel and Jesus would be raised up as second in command over their kingdom—Daniel over Medo-Persia and King Jesus over heaven.

Now, here's the tenth point that makes Jesus better, my friends. While Daniel cheated death, King Jesus defeated death. Brothers and sisters, we can look to Daniel as our model, but never let us forget the reason we fight the good fight, the reason we live the way we do, the reason we endure trials and tribulations, and the reason we stand when no one will stand with us. The reason I not because another guy did it and found success. It's because King Jesus saved us and He is worth any measure of faithfulness we can give back to Him.

So Daniel 6 is a model for how we should live and a reminder that King Jesus came and is the One Who not only will give us all we need in this life, but He will set us free as He did Daniel. So we give Jesus all the praise, all the worship and all the glory. Amen?

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove

All Scriptures quoted directly English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.com).