Facing The Lions
Scripture Text: Daniel 6:10-24

Introduction

Are you facing any lions? Maybe it is not a literal lion, but maybe you are facing some serious challenges, perhaps challenges to your faith. Maybe your faith is being tested and you are challenged to trust God. There are many trials, temptations, and situations we face that challenge our faith in God. While it may be difficult to be faithful in the times of peace, when things are going well, it may be equally hard to trust God when you face a truly difficult circumstance. Some think that serving God and following Jesus is free of any trouble, but we have a very real enemy who seeks to destroy us. If things are going so well and our faith is not challenged, it could indicate that we are not as faithful as we think. Daniel faced a unique challenge, one that threatened his life. He had a choice to remain faithful to God and disobey a king, or obey the king and be unfaithful to God.

There Is A Higher Law

I once heard another pastor say that above all, followers of Jesus should be found faithful. It is not how many people come to church, nor how much money the church raises, but it is how faithful the church is to God. Sometimes, being faithful does not bring good times. In fact, many times, being faithful brings trouble with this world. Evil men schemed to have King Darius enact a law that made it illegal to pray to God. They had found no problem with Daniel’s work, because he was a good servant. What they were able to do was find a way to use the king to bring Daniel’s faithfulness into conflict with the law. How did Daniel respond to this challenge to his faith? Look at the following.

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.

There are four things about Daniel’s faithfulness to God. First, Daniel was a man of prayer, as he prayed three times a day. Second, Daniel thanked God. Even though he was still in exile and facing the threat of death, Daniel was thankful. Third, Daniel did not hide his faith. He was not a secret disciple, but he let others know Who he served. Fourth, Daniel did not compromise even in the face of death. He knew what would happen if he remained faithful to God, and he deliberately defied the law of the land. How can this be reconciled with God’s command to obey civil authority (Romans 13:1–2)? Scripture tells us to obey the government, but it also teaches that there is a higher law—the law of God. There may be times when the law of the land and the law of God are in conflict. Which law will you follow when they do come into conflict? If someone tells you to deny your faith or you will be killed, what will you do? If someone tells you to say a “white lie” or you will lose your job, what will you do? If someone tells you to say sin is not sin or you will be jailed for a hate crime, what will you do? We should remain faithful to God regardless of what the situation is. God’s law is higher than man’s law.

Scripture quoted from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.
Lions Seek to Devour the Faithful

The thing about lions is that they devour other animals. The same is true for people. Some unbelievers are friendly to God’s people and can work well with God’s church. However, not every unbeliever is friendly to the faithful. Satan is certainly no friend of God’s faithful. The Bible calls Satan, our adversary, a prowling, devouring lion. Look at the following verse.

1 Peter 5:8–9  
8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.  
9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Satan wants to destroy God’s work. Satan wants to destroy God’s people. Oftentimes, to accomplish his evil plans, Satan employs people into his service and uses them as tools to construct his evil schemes. Some people may not know that they are being used by a roaring lion. Certainly, the evil schemers who conspired to destroy Daniel were really doing Satan’s work. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 6:11-13  
11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God.  
12 Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, “O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.”  
13 Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.”

Like little children, these wicked men spied on Daniel. They saw what they had hoped to see, Daniel faithfully worshipping God and breaking the king’s new law. This was the opportunity these jealous officials had been waiting to see. Then, these wicked men went to the king with their news. They confirmed with Darius that he had issued the law, which Darius acknowledged and said it was irrevocable. Then these schemers promptly reported that Daniel had violated the king’s command and they tried to make Daniel look as bad as possible. First, they emphasized that Daniel was not truly one of them; he was an exile captured from Judah. There was no reason to mention this other than to humiliate Daniel and to make him seem more likely to be disloyal. Second, they claimed that Daniel’s actions were disrespectful, not merely of the king’s law but of the king himself. They declared that Daniel “pays no attention to you”. Not only had Daniel disobeyed the king and broken the law, but he did it three times every day. Thus, this was not a mere lapse on Daniel’s part. He intentionally defied the king and his law. These lions were prowling around trying to destroy Daniel. Lions do the same today.

Some Unbelievers Seek to Help the Faithful

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Not all unbelievers scheme to persecute God’s faithful people. Some unbelievers are friendly to God’s people. Some unbelievers are seekers of truth. They may even be tender to the things of God. This seems to be true for Darius. When the king heard the charges against Daniel, he was deeply troubled. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 6:14-15  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.”

The situation with Daniel grieved Darius. We might think the king would have been upset that someone dared to defy his law. He might have been really upset that one of his trusted advisors, someone who he was going to put in charge of the whole kingdom, would disobey him. However, Darius was not upset because Daniel had been praying, but because he realized the real purpose of the law the other officials had him to sign. It was not to honor Darius, but to eliminate Daniel, a rival of the jealous officials. The true purpose of the law was to trap Daniel, whom the king respected. This added to the king’s distress. Darius understood that he had been duped by these evil men. He was probably not only angry at himself for being deceived, but he was angry at these deceivers. However, these bloodthirsty schemers reminded Darius that the law could not be revoked. While it was possible for the king to actually change a law he had signed, to do so would result in an enormous loss of face. He would lose credibility with his people. Even so, Darius wished to deliver Daniel from death. The king probably had the law books searched to discover if there might be some legal loophole that he could use to render the law nonenforceable. Despite Darius’ efforts to deliver Daniel, however, he was forced to acknowledge that the law condemned Daniel to the den of lions.

We Are Examples of Faithfulness to Others

The Persians used mutilation by lions as one of several brutal forms of execution. Because Daniel was found faithful to God and had broken the king’s law, he was unfortunately destined for this cruel punishment. Look at the following verses.

Daniel 6:16-17  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.

It was Daniel’s continual service to God that caused him to be cast into the lions’ den. To make sure that no outside help was given to Daniel, the mouth of the den was covered with a stone, which was then sealed with the signet rings of the king and his lords. Humanly speaking, Daniel was left all alone to face his fate. Yet Darius’s last words to Daniel pointed to a higher source of help: “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!” This is noteworthy as Daniel must have set an outstanding
example to others. Darius characterized Daniel as “serving” his God “continually.” He had noticed Daniel’s faithfulness. The king hoped that Daniel’s devotion would cause his God to deliver him from the lions. Then, Darius went home distressed about Daniel.

**Daniel 6:18-20** 18 Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him. 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?”

King Darius spent the night fasting and possibly praying for Daniel. At dawn, he hurried to the lions’ den and then cried out to Daniel in anguish. He obviously cared very much for Daniel. Darius was not certain that Daniel was Ok. His “anguished” voice indicated that he was not sure that Daniel was alive, but he was hopeful that Daniel’s God would save him. The fact that Darius believed it was even possible that Daniel might be alive indicates that Daniel might have been telling the king about God. Daniel’s faithfulness not only caught the attention of those who schemed to bring him down, it also caught the attention of King Darius. Darius knew that Daniel faithfully served God, and he got to see Daniel’s faith in action. Who knows what effect this had on Darius. In order for believers to impress the world, they must live a consistent Christian life. Is our life consistent? What kind of example are you to others? Do others see your faith to Jesus lived out? Will those with whom you interact this week see your faithfulness to Jesus? Will they know who you continually serve?

**God Shows That He Is In Control**

Like all of the other chapters in the book of Daniel, this passage reminds us about God’s sovereignty. God moves kings and kingdoms like pieces on a chessboard. God gives to whomever He wills and He takes from whomever He wills. God gave Judah into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. God gave Nebuchadnezzar kingship and greatness. God gave Belshazzar all that he had. And, even though Daniel was thrown into the lion’s den because of the evil schemes of men who tried to control the situation, God was also sovereign of Daniel’s fate. As much as mankind tries to control God, God shows that He is the one who is sovereign. Look at the following verses.

**Daniel 6:21-23** 21 Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.” 23 Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

God had sent his angel to keep Daniel safe from the lions during the night. Darius found that Daniel had spent a comfortable night even though he was surrounded by lions, while Darius himself had been unable to sleep though surrounded by royal luxury.
Daniel said that God saved him because he was “blameless”. Daniel was not saying he was perfect, but rather, he claimed that his allegiance to God made him guiltless in this matter. It was Daniel’s faith in God, not his works, that brought him deliverance from the lions. Because Daniel trusted in God and was found blameless before Him, God sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions so that they were unable to hurt Daniel. God showed once again that He was in control of the situation. Darius “was overjoyed” and ordered Daniel to be lifted out of the den. When God’s faithful servant emerged from the pit, they found no injury on him. The reason for Daniel’s miraculous deliverance is that he had trusted in God. When we face the roaring lion of Satan, or his little minions who seek to do us harm, the best response is to simply trust God. The fate of the evil schemers who had called for Daniel’s execution was not so fortunate. Knowing their evil actions, Darius ordered the same punishment for them that they had wanted for Daniel. Look at the following verse.

Daniel 6:24 And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

Daniel was guilty of breaking the law, but he had been falsely accused of being disloyal to the king. Not only were the conspirators thrown to the lions, but their families were thrown into the den of lions with them. Sometimes, our sin not only causes us suffering, but also suffering to our family and friends. We should not get the mistaken impression that these lions were old, fat, or just not hungry. Daniel points out that when these wicked officials and their families were thrown into the den, the lions pounced upon them before they even reached the bottom of the pit, overpowering them and crushing all their bones. This demonstrates the miraculous character of Daniel’s deliverance. These lions would have certainly killed Daniel had God not sovereignly intervened.

Conclusion

Daniel was saved from the evil schemes of people who sought to do him harm. He was also saved from the roaring lions in the pit. God miraculously rescued Daniel from a terrible fate. God still rescues us today from the roaring lion of Satan and from the real threat of death. God is still in the saving business and freely offers that to whosoever will trust in Christ. Whosoever believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior will be saved from eternal separation from God. Once we know Jesus as Lord and Savior, we ought to then share Him with others. People ought to know Jesus through us. A.W. Tozer once wrote, “What’s closest to your heart is what you talk about, and if God is closest to your heart, you will talk about him.” How close is Jesus to your heart? Do you talk about Him to others? Do other people know who you serve? Do they know to Whom to turn when they face the lions of this life? Does the world see your faith, or are the windows of your faith closed to them? May we be found faithful in serving God and sharing Jesus with the world. This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!

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