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In the Lion's Den, Daniel 6

By Aaron Shamp

Introduction

- This story is presented as “supernatural... but not sensational.”
- Daniel was an object of scorn for his peers. They knew that they could catch him in a trap by using his faith, a testament to his character.
 - The decree was meant that for 30 days everyone was to recognize Darius as the one representative of the gods and sole mediator between the gods and man.

Daniel's Calling

- Daniel lives out the calling the Jeremiah delivered to the exiles.
 - Daniel is high in the government's administration. He is honest, effective, and excellent.
 - He's also an OT example of Jesus' commission to us, “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” -- Matthew 5:13-16 (CSB)
- Like salt, Christians have to disperse and immerse into the world to live out our calling. In ancient times, you would put salt in things as a preservative.
 - When people try to build a name or society for themselves without God it produces breakdown.
 - Consider on an individual level: the anxiety and problems caused by trying to make a name for yourself.

- Therefore, we are the preservative in whatever city God places us.
- How does this play out in practice?
 - First of all, churches should talk less about sending people into ministry, but Christians should be thinking about ministry more.
 - Daniel had a secular job; yet, he had the same kind of impact that was done by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.
 - Secondly, salt needs to be present where things are breaking down.

Daniel's Challenge

- Consider the flow of the narrative...
 - Daniel was up for a promotion, which prompted his peers to try to tear him down. First, they attempted to find dirt on him but failed. This makes them even more resentful. Here's the principle... *"There is something about Christians from the perspective of the world that is irreducibly strange."*
 - "The world cannot understand Christians. Christians should not be getting bent out of shape about that. It comes with the territory."¹
- Christians are strange to the world because our true country is elsewhere.
 - Our jewels are the world's tinsel and what the world considers tinsel are our jewels.
 - The thing that changes the roots of your soul is when they are planted in the gospel of grace.
 - However, the world cannot understand this and they will see it as arrogance. There will be hurt no matter how hard you try.

Daniel's Resolve

- First, the focus of the prayer. He prayed with his windows open towards Jerusalem. This signals that his prayers were focused on the kingdom of God and his people.
 - Bringing our own needs before God the Father is perfectly right, but mature believers also practice intercession for God's people.

- Second, the defiance of prayer. Daniel knew that the document had been signed, yet he prayed anyway.
 - Consider all of the practical excuses he could have come up with. The kinds of reasons that we skip our duties to the Lord.
 - But Daniel prayed *anyway*.
 - “Daniel was able to see the actual issue. He knew he was not facing a minor religious inconvenience (just wait thirty days until the current prayer ban is lifted). It was actually a matter of whether he would keep the first commandment (Exod. 20:3; same issue as in ch.3). Daniel faces a king who is ‘god-keeper for a month’ and the politicians who pushed the provision through, and prays to Yahweh anyway. Prayer is the way he keeps the first commandment; by prayer he goes on worshiping the true God anyway, and so prayer is here an ‘idol-busting’ activity. And the most tempting idol was not Darius’ quasi-divinity; it may likely have been Daniel’s own security. Daniel had to answer the question: What matters most—the worship of God or my safety? His response shows that he so much as said, ‘I must not make an idol of my own safety and so by prayer I destroy that idol.’”²
- Third, the consistency of prayer. This was Daniel’s usual practice that he did not intend on ending. There’s no turmoil, anguish, or flinching. He simply continues to pray.
 - The consistency aids his courage. The discipline fed his faithfulness.
- Fourth, the posture of prayer.
 - Daniel prayed on his knees. This is a posture of submission before our king.

End Notes

¹ Timothy Keller, “The Lions of God,” Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

² Dale Ralph Davis.