

FAITHFULNESS

CORE PASSAGE: DANIEL 6:13-24

CONTEXT

In the waning years of Nebuchadnezzar's rule, the Lord humbled him for seven years and then restored him to his throne, for which the king praised the Lord as "the King of the heavens" (Daniel 4:37). But the king's descendant failed to learn this lesson. On a night of revelry, Belshazzar defiled the gold vessels taken from the Lord's temple. He then observed mysterious fingers writing on the wall, which Daniel interpreted as God's coming judgment upon the king. That very night, Belshazzar was killed, and Babylon was conquered by Darius (Cyrus) of the Medo-Persian Empire. Daniel then served Darius as an administrator of the kingdom.

KEY CONCEPT

We honor God when we live in faith and trust God in all situations.

As you examine Daniel 6:13-24:

- Recognize that Daniel felt honoring God with his life was more important than preserving it.
- Consider that when we are falsely accused, we can rest in God's justice.



TIMELINE

Daniel and His Friends Serve
Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1-4)

Babylon Is Conquered by Darius the Mede,
Who Is Cyrus of Persia (Daniel 5)

**SESSION STUDY: Daniel Is Thrown
into the Lions' Den (Daniel 6)**

Daniel Interprets the Writing on
the Wall for Belshazzar (Daniel 5)

Cyrus of Persia Issues Decree Allowing
the Jews to Return to Judah (Ezra 1)

Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** 2 Kings 25:27-30

☐ **Day 4:** Daniel 6:1-18

☐ **Day 2:** Jeremiah 52:31-34

☐ **Day 5:** Daniel 6:19-28

☐ **Day 3:** Daniel 5:1-31

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 91



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to access this session's
Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

DANIEL 6:13-18

FAITHFULNESS INCLUDES LIVING OUT OUR FAITH WHEN PERSECUTED.

Circle the charge for which Daniel was being persecuted and the way the king described Daniel's actions.

13 Then they replied to the king, "Daniel, one of the Judean exiles, has ignored you, the king, and the edict you signed, for he prays three times a day." **14** As soon as the king heard this, he was very displeased; he set his mind on rescuing Daniel and made every effort until sundown to deliver him. **15** Then these men went together to the king and said to him, "You know, Your Majesty, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no edict or ordinance the king establishes can be changed." **16** So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you continually serve, rescue you!" **17** A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing in regard to Daniel could be changed. **18** Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting. No diversions were brought to him, and he could not sleep.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Following God and being a believer in Jesus Christ can come with persecution in our world. Yet we continue to live in faith because He is with us and has saved us. We don't fear death because He has resurrection power, whereas those without Christ will suffer an eternal death.

Key Concept: We honor God when we live in faith and trust God in all situations.

It's difficult to find a more faithful response to a political act than what Daniel displayed in Daniel 6. When he learned of the edict to pray to no one but the king for thirty days, he went to his house, faced Jerusalem, and got down on his knees to pray (vv. 1-10). Daniel's response was to do what he had always done—pray to God alone despite what the world around him demanded.

This edict was a scheme of the satraps and administrators who set themselves against Daniel. Pay attention to this fact, for it is remarkable. Daniel was so faithful to God that his enemies could find no other way to bring him down than to use his faithfulness against him (vv. 4-5). Therefore, they made a new law so they could catch Daniel in the act of civil disobedience by doing what he always did—praying (vv. 6-9).

How are you challenged by Daniel's example of faithful prayer in this passage?

Once Daniel's haters had the evidence, they wasted no time bringing it to the king's attention. They had thought out the plan fully. They knew Darius would try to find a way to free Daniel because he was such a good servant. So they leaned on the law that any edict passed by the king was irrevocable, even by the king who passed it. The king's hands were tied by his own signature. Duped by his own administration, the king had Daniel thrown to the lions.

Why would God allow such a thing to happen to a man who continually served Him (Daniel 6:16)? Shouldn't faithfulness prevent such suffering? The answer, according to Scripture, is no. In fact, Jesus Himself said that we would suffer for His sake (John 15:20). When we face persecution for the sake of Christ, it is the faith He grants that gives us the strength to endure. His resurrection power arises within us and reminds us that even if the lions devour us, all they can do is usher us into our Savior's hands.

How do you think about the suffering you experience in life? How should you?



PERSONAL PREPARATION

DANIEL 6:19-24

THOSE WHO DO NOT LIVE IN FAITH WILL FACE PUNISHMENT AND DEATH.

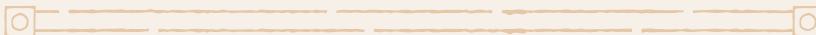
Underline the reason Daniel was spared from death in the lions' den.

19 At the first light of dawn the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. **20** When he reached the den, he cried out in anguish to Daniel. "Daniel, servant of the living God," the king said, "has your God, whom you continually serve, been able to rescue you from the lions?" **21** Then Daniel spoke with the king: "May the king live forever. **22** My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths; and they haven't harmed me, for I was found innocent before him. And also before you, Your Majesty, I have not done harm." **23** The king was overjoyed and gave orders to take Daniel out of the den. When Daniel was brought up from the den, he was found to be unharmed, for he trusted in his God. **24** The king then gave the command, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the lions' den—they, their children, and their wives. They had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT: God is all-powerful: there is nothing God cannot do so long as it does not contradict His own nature or law. God has power and authority over the universe He created, from the largest solar system to the smallest particle. Affirming that God is all-powerful does not mean that God can sin since that would go against His perfect moral nature. As Christians, we rest in the belief that the God who has all power is good, and we gain great comfort by knowing that an all-powerful God is working for our good and joy.

Key Concept: We honor God when we live in faith and trust God in all situations.



Daniel's wisdom in serving the king and his faithfulness in prayer landed him in the lions' den, yet only one action was noted for his survival there—"he trusted in his God" (v. 23). As the king ran to the tomb in anguish, he hoped Daniel was spared. Logic and reason told Darius that it could not be so. Everyone knew the elderly Daniel could not have fended off the lions himself. They were kept hungry for such an occasion. If Daniel were spared, even Darius knew only one person could have done it—the living God—and He did.

God's power is immense. He is omnipotent. There is nothing God cannot do, especially as simple to Him as shutting lions' mouths. But it was God's faithfulness to His holy name that compelled His strength. Through Daniel, God was proving the kind of God He is. He is not capricious. His edicts are everlasting and just, made in righteousness, not vanity. The living God alone is worthy of worship, and Daniel's experience in the lions' den proved it.

In what circumstances can trusting God's power bring you comfort?

The administrators and satraps tried to paint Daniel as an unfaithful betrayer of the king because Daniel's highest allegiance was to his God. But Daniel and King Darius counted him acquitted of the charge since the living God rescued him from the lions. So Darius turned the tables on the accusers, who had manipulated the king for their own benefit and who would have deprived the king of his most effective administrator.

By the king's command, the accusers, along with their families, suffered the fate they had plotted out for their enemy. Yet ultimately, the judgment of God fell upon their houses for their faithlessness of attacking God's man, as seen in the fact that the lions that had passed over Daniel devoured them immediately.

What does this passage teach us about God's justice?

DANIEL'S FAITHFULNESS

Read Daniel 6:13-24. Record the differences in the ways Daniel and his accusers related to the Lord and to the king.

FAITHFUL SERVANT

FAITHLESS ACCUSERS

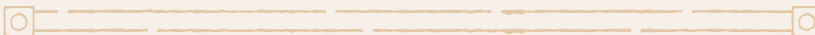
THE LORD

THE KING

How did Daniel's life of integrity impact the people around him, both positively and negatively?

What are some ways we can show faithfulness to God in our spheres of influence?

Key Concept: We honor God when we live in faith and trust God in all situations.



HEAD

How has your faith in God sustained you through difficult times?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read Psalm 91. Pray through the psalm, thanking the Lord that He answers His children and will be with them in times of trouble. Pray to follow in Jesus's steps of faith, not to complain or test the Lord but to trust His will and ways for your life (see Luke 4:1-11).



HEART

What fears keep you from bold, faithful obedience to God in the world?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HANDS

How will you express your faith in Jesus outwardly this week?

THE DOCTRINE OF THE KINGDOM

By Greg Kilgore

You may have heard it said jokingly that “Americans have no king but Elvis.” The United States often prides itself in not having a king since the Revolutionary War. In many Western nations, there are presidents or prime ministers, but these leaders are not all-powerful sovereigns. Many people today do not really understand the idea of an all-powerful king. Most of the titles surrounding kings in the West come simply from honorary titles, such as homecoming kings.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM

Why is the kingdom of God important for Christians? God’s rule and reign is one of the major themes of the entire Bible. The kingdom is centered on Christ, and many prophecies in the Old Testament predict the coming King who will rule and reign perfectly over His people. Zechariah 9 presented the King as coming to Jerusalem to bring salvation to His people. Daniel 7 promised a coming kingdom that will be eternal and comprehensive—everything will be subject to the coming King’s authority and dominion.

Additionally, the importance of the kingdom is seen in how many times Jesus speaks of the kingdom in His ministry. The kingdom is mentioned 126 times in the Gospels; thus, it is one of the dominant themes of Christ’s teaching ministry.

GOD’S GENERAL SOVEREIGNTY

What does it mean that Christians are part of the kingdom of God? Even if we have never lived under the rule of a king in our own country, we can understand the rule of Christ as King. The kingdom of God is made up of God’s general rule over all and Christ’s particular kingship over His people who trust in Him as their Lord and Savior. Most statements of faith describe God’s kingdom and His rule. The Baptist Faith and Message, for example, identifies these categories this way: “The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King.”¹

As we consider this statement, the question “Why is God king?” might arise. Ultimately, it is due to Him creating the universe (Genesis 1–2). Psalm 103:19 states, “The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.”

God alone has the power to create and rule His universe. Thus, the first part of God's kingdom is His general rule and reign over the universe.

CHRIST'S PARTICULAR KINGSHIP

The second element of the kingdom includes Christ's kingship over those who acknowledge Him as King: "Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ."² This means that the second element of the kingdom entails the saving rule and reign of Christ in our hearts and lives.

People do not enter this kingdom by any earthly means. Entrance into the kingdom of Christ does not come on the basis of earthly merit, power, or nationality. How, then, do we enter this saving kingdom of Christ? When Jesus was talking with Nicodemus, He said, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). We enter this kingdom through the spiritual birth that takes place at conversion. We enter Christ's kingdom by being born again. We enter this kingdom by knowing and loving the King. The entrance into the kingdom of Christ is cross- and resurrection-shaped. Through trusting in Jesus Christ's perfect life, death, and resurrection, we enter this saving rule of Christ in His particular kingdom.

Every single person is under the rule of God as king because they are part of His universe. However, we enter the particular kingdom that is marked by salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

OUR ROLE IN THE KINGDOM

For those who have trusted in Christ, we have a role to play in this kingdom. Even though God's rule is established, Christ's saving kingdom has not yet fully arrived here and now. When we read the New Testament, we see the emphasis on the return of Christ to establish His reign fully and finally in the new heavens and new earth. As believers, we live between the times, that is, between the beginning of the end and the "full consummation" of Christ's eternal reign.

The kingdom was inaugurated with Jesus's first advent. Through God's Word and Spirit, we are called to life under His lordship, where we are freely accepted and forgiven. This also means that we are committed to Jesus's kingdom priorities in the age to come and seek to work them out in our own lives and in the present age as well.

Until Christ returns, every local church is meant to be a gospel outpost of the kingdom of God, and every Christian is meant to be an ambassador of Jesus's kingdom in this world (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Greg Kilgore is the associational missions strategist for the Mid-Valley Southern Baptist Association and a member of Woodward Park Baptist Church in Fresno, California. He and his wife, Megan, have three children: Owen, Camille, and Judson Titus. Greg is a PhD student at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he also teaches as an adjunct professor.