

Sun., Aug. 29

Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 17:37 David said, “The Lord who rescued me from the power of both lions and bears, will rescue me from the power of this giant.”

Message: Living in the Fire: Stand With

Text: Psalm 57:4 “My life is in the middle of a pack of lions. I lie down among those who devour humans. Their teeth are spears and arrows; their tongues are sharpened swords.”

Reading of Scripture & Sermon Scripture: Daniel 6:1-28

Blurb: We end our series on Daniel with his most famous story: Daniel and the lion’s den. It’s pretty dramatic, but we’ll discover that once again, this story really isn’t about Daniel at all! Ultimately, it’s about us, and what we will do with God. Will we stand WITH God, no matter what? We’ll be listening to the Holy Spirit to hear what we each need to do to stand steadfastly WITH God.

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor Andrew

MEMORY VERSE: -Pastor Andrew

“The Lord who rescued me from the power of both lions and bears, will rescue me from the power of this giant.” -1 Samuel 17:37 (David when facing Goliath)

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Our God Saves

All Creatures of Our God and King

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Covenant Song* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE: -Pastor David

“The Lord who rescued me from the power of both lions and bears, will rescue me from the power of this giant.” -1 Samuel 17:37 (David when facing Goliath)

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Our God Saves

All Creatures of Our God and King

Goodness of God

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

LOVE MOMENT: Wednesday Meals starting Sept. 8 -Pastor Andrew

PRAYERS: -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

PP Slide: Generational Bridge
Daniel 6

1. How many days were the people to pray only to the king?
2. What did Daniel's prayer window face?
3. What did the king do all night as he hoped Daniel was spared?

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE -Pastor David

Addressing the kids:

Come on family, it's time for our radio program. Kids, you're going to love this, too. It's an exciting story about Daniel, from the Bible, Daniel chapter 6. It's about the Daniel in the lion's den! So, during the program, listen for

1. How many days were the people to pray only to the king?
2. What did Daniel's prayer window face?
3. What did the king do all night as he hoped Daniel was spared?

Listening? Here we go!

[Pastor David "turns on" radio and sits down on the couch.]

WFHC RADIO SHOW Daniel 6:1-28 -Reader: Dramatic Reading Team

Plot against Daniel

1 Darius decided to appoint one hundred twenty chief administrators throughout the kingdom, 2 and to set over them three main officers to whom they would report so that the king wouldn't have to be bothered with too much. One of these main officers was Daniel. 3 Because of his extraordinary spirit, Daniel soon surpassed the other officers and the chief administrators—so much so that the king had plans to set him over the entire kingdom. 4 As a result, the other officers and the chief administrators tried to find some problem with Daniel's work for the kingdom. But they couldn't find any problem or corruption at all because Daniel was trustworthy. He wasn't guilty of any negligence or corruption.

5 So these men said, "We won't find any fault in Daniel, unless we can find something to use against him from his religious practice."

6 So these officers and chief administrators ganged together and went to the king. They said to him, "Long live King Darius! 7 All the officers of the kingdom, the ministers, the chief administrators, the royal associates, and the governors advise the king to issue an edict and enforce a law, that for thirty days anyone who says prayers to any god or human being except you, Your Majesty, will be thrown into a pit of lions. 8 Now, Your Majesty, issue the law and sign the document so that it cannot be changed, as per the law of Media and Persia, which cannot be annulled." 9 Because of this, King Darius signed the document containing the law.

Daniel prays

10 When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went to his house. Now his upper room had open windows that faced Jerusalem. Daniel knelt down, prayed, and praised his God three times that day, just like he always did. 11 Just then these men, all ganged together, came upon Daniel praying and seeking mercy from his God. 12 They then went and talked to the king about the law: “Your Majesty! Didn’t you sign a law, that for thirty days any person who prays to any god or human being besides you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into a pit of lions?”

The king replied, “The decision is absolutely firm in accordance with the law of Media and Persia, which cannot be annulled.”

13 So they said to the king, “One of the Judean exiles, Daniel, has ignored you, Your Majesty, as well as the law you signed. He says his prayers three times a day!”

14 When the king heard this report, he was very unhappy. He decided to rescue Daniel and did everything he could do to save Daniel before the sun went down. 15 But these men, all ganged together, came and said to the king, “You must realize, Your Majesty, that the law of Media and Persia, including every law and edict the king has issued, cannot be changed.”

Daniel in the lions’ pit

16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and hurled him into the pit of lions. The king said to Daniel: “Your God—the one you serve so consistently—will rescue you.”

17 A single stone was brought and placed over the entrance to the pit. The king sealed it with his own ring and with those of his princes so that Daniel’s situation couldn’t be changed. 18 The king then went home to his palace and fasted through the night. No pleasures were brought to him, and he couldn’t sleep. 19 At dawn, at the first sign of light, the king rose and rushed to the lions’ pit.

20 As he approached it, he called out to Daniel, worried: “Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God—the one you serve so consistently—able to rescue you from the lions?”

21 Then Daniel answered the king: “Long live the king! 22 My God sent his messenger, who shut the lions’ mouths. They haven’t touched me because I was judged innocent before my God. I haven’t done anything wrong to you either, Your Majesty.”

23 The king was thrilled. He commanded that Daniel be brought up out of the pit, and Daniel was lifted out. Not a scratch was found on him, because he trusted in his God. 24 The king then ordered that the men who had accused Daniel be brought and thrown into the lions’ pit—including their wives and children. They hadn’t even reached the bottom of the pit before the lions overpowered them, crushing all their bones.

New decree

25 Then King Darius wrote the following decree:

To all the peoples, nations, and languages inhabiting the entire earth: I wish you much peace. 26 I now issue this command: In every region of my kingdom, all people must fear and revere Daniel’s God because:

He is the living God.

God stands firm forever.

His kingship is indestructible.

God's rule will last until the end of time.

27 He is rescuer and savior;

God performs signs and miracles in heaven and on earth.

Here's the proof: He rescued Daniel from the lions' power.

28 And so Daniel was made prosperous during the rule of Darius and [or "that is,"] during the rule of Cyrus the Persian.

PP Slide: Generational Bridge
Daniel 6

1. How many days were the people to pray only to the king?
2. What did Daniel's prayer window face?
3. What did the king do all night as he hoped Daniel was spared?

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE, CONTINUED -Pastor David

[Pastor David turns off the radio.]

Wasn't that exciting? Thanks for listening.

- So, kids,
1. How many days were the people to pray only to the king? [30]
 2. What did Daniel's prayer window face? [Jerusalem]
 3. What did the king do as he hoped Daniel would be spared? [Fasted]

And now, in the sermon, we're going to hear how we can stand faithfully with God, no matter what.

MESSAGE: Strange Fire Series (Daniel) Living in the Fire #6: Stand With

BUMPER VIDEO

PP#1: (Daniel) Living in the Fire: Stand With

"My life is in the middle of a pack of lions. I lie down among those who devour humans. Their teeth are spears and arrows; their tongues are sharpened swords." -Psalm 57:4

Living in the Fire: Stand With. David declared in Psalm 57:4, "My life is in the middle of a pack of lions. I lie down among those who devour humans. Their teeth are spears and arrows; their tongues are sharpened swords."

PP#2: King of Neo-Babylonian Empire

Nabopolassar (626-605 BC)

Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC)

Nabonidus (556-539 BC)

Belshazzar (553?-539 BC)

Darius/Cyrus of Persia (d. 530 BC)

Timeline

625 Babylon conquers Assyria

605 Daniel (17?) taken to Babylon

604 Daniel (18?) Chapter 3

580? Daniel (42?) Chapter 4

539 Daniel (83?) Chapter 5

538? Daniel (84?) Chapter 6

Today we come to the end of the story of our hero: Daniel, in ancient Babylon. We've been with him for over 60 years! He's now in his 80s, and in his long life, he has faced many trials, but

he has also tenaciously stood faithfully *with* God. Through it all, Daniel saw again and again that God was unfolding much bigger plans. He saw God convert the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar, and then God hauled him out of retirement to challenge the pompous Belshazzar. But God's not done with Daniel yet!

Belshazzar died when the Persians successfully conquered Babylon. The Bible says that "Darius the Mede" took over. This could be either the name of the governor that the Persians King Cyrus put over Babylon, or it could be the King Cyrus' throne name in Babylon. It's probably the latter, since Cyrus' mother was the princess of Media. Either way, it is not the famous King Darius I "The Great" of Persia, who ruled eight years *after* Cyrus.

PP#3: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

Turn to Daniel 6. It starts out saying that as Darius organized his newly expanded kingdom, he appointed 120 governors over it, and over them, he appointed three chief officers who answered directly to him. Daniel was not allowed to go back into retirement, as he likely was the sole surviving leader in Babylon. Darius also learned of Daniel's excellent administrative gifts. Remember, back in chapter 1 God blessed Daniel with exceptional wisdom and gifts of administration? Well, not only did Darius make Daniel one of his three top officers, soon Daniel so distinguished himself that the king soon made plans to make Daniel the number two person in the whole Persian empire.

Now, there are lots of observations here from this passage of Scripture. I think rather than me choosing the three main points today, I'm going to point out twelve of them, and invite you to select two or three that the Holy Spirit places on your heart to be specifically for you. Okay? So, on your note sheet in the bulletin, number one, two and three. Then, as the Holy Spirit highlights an application for you—makes it stand out to you, write it down. So, you need to be listening to me, *and* to what the Holy Spirit is saying in your heart. Ready? So, the first few takeaways:

PP#4: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

1. No retiring from God's work

1. Daniel was still used by God well into his 80s. There is no retiring from God's work! If you find yourself having been through enough, wanting to only go golfing every day, to let others deal with the drama, then you need to hear that's not how God works. Yes, you may need to make room for newer leadership, but you should still get in there and do your part. In fact, God called many of His main leaders *after* retirement: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elizabeth, Anna. We could use some retirees on Wednesday evenings, hint, hint!

PP#5: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

1. No retiring from God's work 2. You still have a purpose

2. You always have a purpose. God has more for you to do. You still have an important purpose. Getting older doesn't mean getting less useful. Yes, what you can do may change, but in God's kingdom, there's never *nothing* for you to do. So, look around and see what God is doing and what God may be calling you to do. You may need to say yes to something God has placed in front of you. What might that be?

PP#6: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

1. No retiring from God's work
2. You still have a purpose
3. God equips you for the work He has for you

3. God equips you for the work God wants you to do. God pours into you what you will need in order to fulfill His purpose for your life. So, if you are wondering what God may be calling you to do, ask yourself what you can do well. Now, notice, this is not necessarily what you LIKE to do. Too often I hear people suggest, "Find what you *enjoy* doing and go do that." Well, there are very few jobs playing video games or eating out! It's far more helpful to ask what you are good at. Sometimes God calls us to be doing things we don't *love*, but are very much needed.

So, any of these applications so far the Holy Spirit is laying on your heart? If so, write it down.

Well, old Daniel finds himself in that familiar tension of being highly regarded *and targeted*. Here he is doing his best, and there are again jealous people gunning for him. Oh the politics! He is vetted under intense scrutiny. As he is morally and ethically upright, they resort to exploiting his religious faithfulness.

PP#7: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

1. No retiring from God's work
2. You still have a purpose
3. God equips you for the work He has for you
4. High ethical standards

4. Next application: are you morally and ethically faultless? We live in a cancel culture, and people are looking for excuses to discredit your Christian's witness. Part of the reason God calls His followers to high ethical standards is that God knows we will be scrutinized intensely. Many high-profile—and low-profile—Christians have been effectively discredited because of a lurking sin in their lives. What activities or behaviors do you have that might taint your witness of God to others? If something comes to mind, write that down!

PP#8: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

2. You still have a purpose
3. God equips you for the work He has for you
4. High ethical standards
5. Consistent in private and public

5. Faithful Christians are consistent through all parts of their lives. Daniel's private religious life was consistent with his public service. The window was open. People knew his beliefs. In fact, that became the target for their accusations. Do people know your religious convictions? Can people *see* your religious convictions? Do you behave on Thursday morning like you do Sunday morning? Do you behave at home like you do in public? If others targeted your religious convictions, as the question goes, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Where do you need to be more consistent, more bold? Write that down.

PP#9: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

3. God equips you for the work He has for you
4. High ethical standards
5. Consistent in private and public
6. Do not grow weary in doing good

The other administrators plot against Daniel, and shrewdly appeal to the king's vanity. Sound like chapter 3 again! Daniel is caught *again*.

6. Do you find yourself facing the same trials as before? You strive to be faithful, but the struggle comes again and again? Enough already, right? I mean, you do the right thing—and it takes *so much* to do it—but things don't resolve or improve. That same person continues to push your buttons, or not respect your boundaries, or use you in their dysfunction. You respond correctly, but it doesn't seem to work. Do you grow weary of doing good? Is God calling you to keep going, hang in here, even when it's not improving? If so, write that down.

The advisors go behind Daniel's back, go lie to the king saying they ALL agree with this new law. Daniel hears about it only after the fact. Well, what does he do? Nothing different! He still goes and prays "just as he always did," (Daniel 6:10b) and he doesn't try to hid it.

PP#10: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

4. High ethical standards
5. Consistent in private and public
6. Do not grow weary in doing good
7. Healthy, holy habits

7. Do you have healthy, holy spiritual habits that you stick to? Do you pray consistently, even when something more interesting comes up? It always will, you know! Do you keep getting up early, if that is your set time for devotions, even when you stay up too late the night before watching a show? If you are in town, are you in worship? This had always been the key to Daniel's steadfastness and calm reliance on God when things went crazy. Are you spiritually ready for a crisis or calling in your life? What are your healthy, holy habits? Is the Holy Spirit bringing this up in you...to re-engage a consistent spiritual practice? If so, write that down.

PP#11: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

5. Consistent in private and public
6. Do not grow weary in doing good
7. Healthy, holy habits
8. When others are watching

8. Do you tend to fudge a bit on your spiritual practices when others are watching? Do you skip your prayer time when you eat out in public? Do you agree to go to the casino even if that is not your preferred practice? Do you swear more when around certain people? Do you try to fit in at work and contribute to the gossip or negativity? When others come to visit do you skip church? Daniel didn't close his window when he prayed. And the others knew: *what* he would be doing, *where* he would be doing it, and *when* he would be doing it. And they staked him out and watched for him. How easy would it have been for Daniel to change. After all, these were self-imposed habits. But Daniel's allegiance was to God first, and I believe that Daniel felt that going to prayer in this way

was all the more vital for him, especially during that time. It says in verse 11 that Daniel was praying for mercy from his God during this setting of entrapment. Changing what you do when others are watching, hurts *you*: it takes you away from the means of grace that you need to stay faithful, all the more in the hardest times. Write it down if this is hitting you.

PP#12: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

6. Do not grow weary in doing good
7. Healthy, holy habits
8. When others are watching
9. Trust God over the powers around

9. Do you trust in God more than the powers around you? Do you trust in God enough to be steady when the bottom falls out? Do you fall apart? Or do you fall to your knees? We saw Daniel do that in chapter 3. And he's still doing it! And look how God us able to use him. If you want to be used by God, work on your habits. If you want peace during the storm, work on your routine. If you want God to carry you when disaster hits, work on your form now. Are you able to trust in a God bigger than the crisis you face? Kurt Charter shared that when he was facing open heart surgery this summer, he was very anxious. We prayed together, and he prayed, day after day. He said that when went to the hospital, his anxiety really began to rise. Then, he said that when he lay down on the table, before they started his medications, a peace suddenly washed over him. He was able to relax and trust that the Lord was holding him. God honored Kurt's trust. How's your trust?

PP#13: *Image of Daniel in the lion's den, with a messenger from God with him there*

Well, the king has come to respect and appreciate Daniel, but he is trapped by his own recklessness. Notice that the king tried all in his power to save Daniel. Wow. But no avail. And see that the king starts to really hope that *Daniel's God* would save him. There is no other hope. Verse 17 offers details that really help us understand that no human intervention was possible. Then, the king fasted all that night for Daniel. Wow. He's putting hope in Daniel's God.

The lion's den was a pit with steep entry, too steep for the lions or a person to climb out. So in the morning, the king calls out, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God—the one you serve so consistently—able to rescue you from the lions?"

Now, notice again, it's not really about Daniel being spared. It's about the witness for the king who is wondering if Daniel's God is real. It's about the king!

Did you catch what Daniel said? First of all, remember his three friends back in the fiery furnace? There was a 4th person in the fire, right? Well, here in chapter 6, verse 22, Daniel testifies, "My God sent His messenger, who shut the lion's mouths." There's that fourth person again!

The king was thrilled, it says in verse 23. Before, no singed clothes or smell of fire, right? Here, verse 23, "not a scratch was found on him." Pretty good for an 85-year-old being thrown down a pit, let alone the lions, right?

The king turns around and orders the conniving advisors to be thrown down to the lions, and horrifically, their families, too. This was common practice in the ancient world, where they practiced the concept of corporate solidity: one represents the whole. This is shocking to our modern, Western concept of individuality, I know, but this is how the ancient world framed households. But that terrible detail is important for the story, so that we would know that the lions were indeed voraciously hungry when they didn't eat Daniel. Only something unnatural stopped them.

PP#14: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

7. Healthy, holy habits
8. When others are watching
9. Trust God over the powers around
10. Personal story of when God spared you

10. Do you have a story of when God fought for you, defended you, spared you? Think back. What comes to mind? Do you need to remember more deeply, to go back and pull out stories of God's deliverance in your life? Have you shared it recently? Perhaps you ought. Remembering God's past deliverance and sharing those stories is key to having assurance while facing what we are now, and so helpful to others who are facing trials. God will help you. He won't always spare you, but He will see you through it. Is the Holy Spirit nudging your memory? If so, write that down!

PP#15: *Image of King Darius proclaiming Daniel's God is true*

The Daniel narrative, which runs from the beginning of Daniel through chapter 6, ends with King Darius' testimony. The last we saw King Nebuchadnezzar he was proclaiming the glory of the one, true God. And this story also ends with Darius proclaiming Daniel's God as the True, Living God. God was working on the king, and Daniel's faithfulness *wasn't for Daniel*, but for Darius. And Daniel got the blessing of seeing God's bigger plan come together. Daniel, it says in verse 28, "was made prosperous during the rule of Darius and during the rule of Cyrus the Persian." The word "and" here could also mean "or," meaning "Darius, otherwise known as Cyrus."

PP#16: *A smaller scene of Daniel in the lion's den, with a bigger picture of King Darius proclaiming Daniel's God is true, with the biggest picture (background?) of the Jews returning to Jerusalem...crafted to show how God is about bigger works/purposes.*

Either way, we know from Ezra chapter 1, that King Cyrus the Persian proclaims in his first year of rule, that God told him to let the Jews go back to Israel and that God wanted Cyrus to rebuild the temple there.

What! Cyrus, who either hears about all this from Darius, or who sees it himself as Darius, turns around and releases Daniel's people to go back to Israel! He claims to have heard from God! How would Cyrus know about God? *Through Daniel!* God was all along working the restoration of His people! Mind blown!

PP#17: Daniel 6: Standing WITH

8. When others are watching
9. Trust God over the powers around
10. Personal story of when God spared you
11. Being a small player in God's bigger plan

11. Are you contented to be faithful in playing a backseat role in a bigger plan that God is doing? If so, are you okay not knowing what God's up to? Daniel didn't! Daniel committed to being faithful. Are you content to being faithful in what you *can see*, and trusting that God is doing something you *can't see*? Are you okay with that even if you never get to see it, this side of glory? If you need to surrender your demand that God show you what's going on, for it to be all about you,

His kingship is indestructible.

God's rule will last until the end of time.

He is rescuer and savior;

God performs signs and miracles in heaven and on earth.

Here's the proof:

He rescued Daniel from the lions' power."

Amen!

[IN-PERSON WORSHIP ONLY] CLOSING SONG: *Raise a Hallelujah* -Sanctify

OFFERING: -Pastor David

-Give of your monies to God's work through this church. You can give in person, mail it in, drop it off or, most conveniently, you can make an electronic transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the "square" on the bulletin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Next Sunday's message: Pastor Andrew preaching
Get ready for Wednesday nights, starting Sept. 8.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"The Lord who rescued me from the power of both lions and bears, will rescue me from the power of this giant." -1 Samuel 17:37 (David when facing Goliath)

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

Romans 15:13 "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."