

“Courage Is a Habit” // Daniel 6 // *Shining in Babylon* #6

(DANIEL BUMPER)

If you have your Bible, and I hope you do, turn to Daniel 6. Today we’re going to look at one of the top 3 most famous stories in the Bible; but, get this: in the 20 years I’ve served you at The Summit Church, I have never ONCE preached on this passage. I couldn’t believe it. Not even once! I think it just felt too familiar.

It’s the story of Daniel and the Lions’ Den. This story is the last of the fast-paced, Daniel-doing-battle-in-Babylon narratives in the book of Daniel--actually, there’s one more in chapter 9--but most of the rest of the book is prophecy. This is the last chapter written in Aramaic--remember I told you week 1 that the first chapter and last chapters are written in Hebrew, the language of Israel, but the middle chapters are written in Aramaic, the language of Babylon, because they take place in Babylon and are written also for for Babylonians to read. Well, this is the last story in Aramaic, the last account of Daniel and his 3 friends shining in Babylon. I’m a little sad. I’ve really enjoyed studying this out.

We’re going to use this story to talk about developing the habit of courage. Courage, I want to show you, is not summoned in a moment; courage is developed through a lifetime of small, brave decisions. What you do when you face opposition, adversity, and difficulty in the small things trains your heart in a pattern that becomes easier and easier to repeat.

You know how when you type something into Google, and it “auto-completes” for you? That drives me nuts, btw: Just because I searched that one time for the current net worth of Zach from Saved by the Bell doesn’t mean I’m searching for that every time I type in the word “current.” Just because I was curious that one time who the current WWE champions was means I want to always know the latest on professional rasslin’. Leave me alone. But Google knows that we follow patterns, and so it autofills our search bar according to how we’ve trained it.

The same thing is true with how your heart responds to adversity. It autofills your response based on the patterns you’ve established.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle said, ‘**Excellence is not an act, it’s a habit.**’ I would say the same thing is true about courage: ‘**Courage is not an act, it’s a habit.**’” It’s developed over years and years and years of repeated patterns.

Daniel 6. Let me remind you of the context: Babylon has been overthrown by the Medes and the Persians; Nebuchadnezzar and his family have all been killed and King Darius of the Medes has taken over.

Daniel is now well over 80, still living in captivity in Babylon. We don’t know what has happened to his friends, S, M and A--presumably by this point they’ve already died.

Darius, in an attempt to keep some political stability in Babylon, brought into his court a lot of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men, and Daniel is one of those.

6:3 Daniel distinguished himself... because he had an extraordinary spirit, so the king planned to set him over the whole realm.

One thing that is consistent about Daniel is that no matter where he is--no matter what circumstance he is, how he got there, or how unfair the situation is--Daniel stays positive, focused on what God wants. And that creates new opportunities wherever he goes. At multiple points, when everybody else would have said, "Your life is over," Daniel said, "I bet God has something for me yet."

And could I just point out that Daniel is more than 80 at this point? So let me just say it: **Old people can still do awesome things.** BTW, Daniel is not the only old guy in history to do awesome thing:

- At 83, William Gladstone became Prime Minister of Great Britain for the fourth time.
- At 87, John Wesley, they say, still preached with almost undiminished eloquence, closing out a career in which he preached 2-3 times a day (more than 40,000 sermons total) traveling more than a quarter million miles on horseback to get to these cities.
- At 89, Michelangelo painted "The Last Judgment"—perhaps the most famous single picture in the world.
- At age 90, Thomas Edison was still filing for new inventions at the Patent Office. Frank Lloyd Wright was still considered an innovative architect and George Bernard Shaw was still writing plays.
- J.C. Penney, the legendary Christian businessman, was still putting in a full work day at age 95.
- Harland Sanders was 65 when he opened Kentucky Fried Chicken, after getting fired from about a dozen of his previous jobs.
- At 71, Winston Churchill led England into WW2. Churchill had won his first election at age 62, btw. Literally. He'd lost *every single election* up to that point.

So, for all you "seasoned" people out there, don't let them tell you that you're done. God may have something for you yet.

4 The administrators and satraps, therefore, kept trying to find a charge against Daniel regarding the kingdom. But they could find no charge or corruption, for he was trustworthy, and no negligence or corruption was found in him.

We see it every couple of years around election time. The commercials start multiplying: "So-and-so is a liar; 32 years ago he said this at a party; He voted with big nursery to take candy from babies." And they always seem to find something. But here these guys search and search and can't find anything—and this after 6 decades of public service. That's pretty remarkable. Daniel is utterly trustworthy in all that he does.

5 Then these men said, "We will never find any charge against this Daniel unless we find something against him concerning the law of his God." 6 So (they) went together to the king and said to him, "May King Darius live forever. 7 All the administrators of the kingdom—the prefects, satraps, advisers, and governors—have agreed that the king should establish an ordinance that, for thirty days, anyone who petitions any god or man except you, the king, will be thrown into the lions' den. (The weak spot that they've found—and I've got to hand it to them—it's pretty ingenious, is built around the King's ego. Basically, they are like, "Oh eternal King,

you're so mighty and your subjects need to learn that they can depend on you for EVERYTHING, so let's make a rule that for 30 days people can only bring their needs to you, so they can see how able you are to take care of them. For 30 days no one can ask ANYBODY else for help. Only you."

8 Therefore, Your Majesty, establish the edict and sign the document so that, as a law of the Medes and Persians, it is irrevocable and cannot be changed." The Medes and the Persians had this custom that once a law was properly passed, it couldn't be changed. The purpose, historians say, was to keep kings from impulsively passing arbitrary laws all willy-nilly just because they were in a bad mood. They get beat at pickleball by a left-handed guy so they outlaw left-handedness. The next day the King is irritated with one of his wives so he passes a law that no women can argue with men. And the law would last only a couple of days until the King calmed down. This custom of not being able to change the law was supposed to add a little gravity to the laws to keep the king from acting capriciously based on his moods. Plus, it helped reinforce the idea that the King was divine, because changing a law implied that the king had made a mistake.

So, the law was passed. Daniel's response? 10 When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house. He opened his upstairs window toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

There it is: the habit. Daniel has done this 3 times daily now for 70 years. He'd done it in Daniel 1 when they tried to force him to eat forbidden foods. He'd done it in chapter 2 when the king threatened to kill all the wise men because no one could interpret his dream. His friends had done it Nebuchadnezzar tried to force them to bow down to his image. Whenever Daniel had been in trouble, he'd turned to God in prayer. What's your instinct when you feel threatened?

- When you've been hurt in your marriage; when you feel like your spouse is just not treating you fairly and it's not getting any better
- When at your job you feel like you are being pressured to do the wrong thing; or you're being treated unfairly by your boss or colleagues;
- When you're being pressured to toe the party line even though it goes against your conscience; or maybe when a friend or a boyfriend or girlfriend is pressuring you to do the wrong thing. You're being pressured to conform.

I'd say our responses usually fit into 1 of 4 categories.

1. **Panic:** You get scared and you cave. "Look, there's no way out; there's this law of the Medes and Persians and it can't be changed and the king and all the important people are behind it. I don't really have a choice here if I want to survive." I love this verse, "*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to bear it.*" (1 Cor 10:13). He always provides a way of escape; he will always supply you with the strength and wisdom to do the right thing. You're never trapped in a situation with only bad options.
2. The second common response to this kind of pressure is **Pride:** "*I will not yield to you. I can overcome this.*" And this one is tricky because it can look, on the outside, like bold faith. The DIFFERENCE is that when you peel back the layers of this response, what you find is not a humble dependence on God but a heart of self-sufficiency. This is a more of a "I'm better than you" attitude, a "you can't beat me" attitude than a

“I’m going to do what God wants and trust him with the results” one. BTW, the sign that you are operating in pride is “prayerlessness.” **Prayerlessness is the indicator light on the dashboard of the Christian life that warns you that pride has set it.** (You know how on your car dashboard you’ve got a little indicator light that tells you that your engine is too hot? Without that light, you’d never know your engine was running hot and it would eventually blow up. That’s happened to some of you because you ignored that little indicator light, right? Prayerlessness is the indicator light of pride.) It reveals that you are confident deep down you’ve got all the resources you need to overcome. Many people think that prayerlessness is the result of a lack of self-discipline. You don’t pray enough for the same reason you don’t work out enough or eat enough alfalfa sprouts. It’s a discipline problem. Prayerlessness is ultimately rooted in pride, however. You are convinced that given enough resources and time you can overcome! But eventually, God is going to put you into a situation where you can’t overcome. Eventually, you’ll see that you are NOT sufficient for all things, and this idea that you were all-powerful was an insane illusion. Some of you are there *now*, aren’t you? You come into here overwhelmed by the challenges of parenting. Utterly defeated by your marriage. Financially underwater. Crushed by a relationship that you just can’t make work. An issue has come up in your health or the health of a loved one that has you scared to death. Nebuchadnezzar said, “All those who walk in pride God is able to humble.” That is true of professing Christians, too. My word to you today: Turn away from pride and toward God.

3. **Preemptive strike.** This is the *Quid Pro Quo* Bryan talked about last week. *Something for something; tit for tat.* I’ll protect myself by fighting. “You hurt me? I’ll hurt you back. You play dirty, I’ll play dirtier.” When Daniel found out about this law, he could have tried to engineer some political tricks back at them. *Quid Pro Quo* is how most of us try to survive. We live in peace with others through mutually assured destruction. The way I’ll keep you from hurting me is by making clear that if you do, I’ll hurt you back worse.
4. *Panic, Pride, Preemptive strike.* Then there is Daniel’s response. **Prayer:** Let me lay this at God’s feet. Ultimately these are his problems, because I don’t belong to me anymore, I belong to him, which means these problems don’t belong to me, either, they belong to him. All I’m responsible for is what he tells me to do. Friend, this is such an incredible way to live. It’s so peaceful, because Jesus shoulders the weight of your problems. Jesus described the Christian life as easy not because it is all sunshine and roses, but because in the Christian life we are “yoked up” with him: **“Come unto me, (he says) all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.... and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt 11:28–30).** **A yoke, you see, typically had a place for two oxen**—they pulled the load together. So, if one ox is stronger, the other gets the benefit of his strength. Imagine you strapped on this yoke to pull a tractor trailer, but strapped in next to you was the world’s strongest man. It might not seem that heavy to you. It might even feel like you are just out taking a walk because he is pulling most of the weight. So it is with Jesus. He shoulders the weight of my marriage problems. He carries the weight of my work problems, or my parenting problems, or my personal struggles. In each of these things, I’m responsible only to walk with him and do what he directs me to do. *What a friend we have in Jesus, oh what needless pain we bear; all because we do not carry, everything to him in prayer.* “Cast your burdens upon the Lord,” Peter says, and he will sustain you.” Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him (do what he wants), and he’ll make your paths straight.

Panic, pride, preemptive strike, or prayer. Daniel chose prayer, and he prayed as peacefully that evening as he had every other one.

So, again, what's your default? You have one. What autofills in your search bar when hard times come? When you feel threatened? Panicky?

Daniel *prayed*.

Friend, I can tell you from experience that there's a peacefulness in that prayer closet you won't find anywhere else. *Sweet hour of prayer, Sweet hour of prayer, That calls me from a world of care, And bids me at my Father's throne, Make all my wants and wishes known, In seasons of distress and grief, My soul has often found relief, And oft escaped the tempter's snare, By Thy return, sweet hour of prayer*

So Daniel prays, and of course, the other wise men see this. They run to the king, scarcely able to contain their excitement: **vs. 12**, "You know, King, we hate, I mean, just hate, to tell you this, but after you signed this edict we all saw Daniel praying. We all just happened to be on the balcony right across from Daniel's house, all looking right at this window through our binoculars at the same time as his regularly scheduled prayer time, and we all saw him. PAUSE. And sadly, King, you know the law of the Medes and Persians can't be changed, so, we've prepared the lions. Right this way, sir."

Darius, of course, sees through their ruse immediately, and he's really upset by it, but he's also bound by this ridiculous custom, so he feels like he has no choice but to throw Daniel in the lion's den: **16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den.**

BTW, a lot of y'all think I hate on cats too much. Can we take a moment and recognize that the King--the man who could have concocted any kind of torture--decided that THE most cruel and unusual punishment he could think of was trapping you in a cage with cats. That speaks volumes to me. I don't even have to make any jokes about cats here; the Scriptures speaks for themselves. And ALL God's people said...

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 (he turned off his Netflix and put away his X-box), and he could not sleep.

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... 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."

Daniel's down there peacefully taking a cat nap with all those lions like he's snuggled up in a brood of kittens. You know, it strikes me when I read this story that literally everyone in this story was up the whole night except Daniel. The wise men were up all night partying; the king was up all night worrying; Daniel's friends were up all night praying; the angel was up all night protecting. Daniel was the only one who got a good night's sleep. TRANSCRIPT: When the King orders the stone rolled away from the den the next day, there's Daniel, snuggled up peacefully with a book, reading between the lions.

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. (Hey--why did God save Daniel like this? Was it because Daniel was special, or because he was elected or foreordained or predestined? The text says it happened for ONE reason: because Daniel trusted in his God and prayed to him, and you can look for this same kind of providential protection in your life if you pray like Daniel did. This story is a promise for how God works in your life. That doesn't mean that nothing bad will ever happen to you, just that God will ultimately deliver you through it all, just like he did Daniel.

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. **Why does the text mention that the lions ate them before their bodies even reached the bottom?** Just in case you thought that maybe the lions hadn't eaten Daniel because they were full. Clearly, they were starving.

And let's acknowledge--that last part, with the wives and children being included in this punishment--is really hard to read. It feels unfair and cruel, and it was. The Bible is certainly not condoning this--this is descriptive not prescriptive. In fact, in the book of Ezekiel, God explicitly condemns this kind of cruelty, where the children are punished for the sins of their parents, but this was common in ancient times. Kings would kill not just their enemies but everyone in their enemy's family lest the kids grow up to try to avenge their parents. These were vicious times, and women and children were often the victims of this viciousness. But the Bible is certainly not condoning it.

25 Then King Darius wrote to those of every people, nation, and language who live on the whole earth: "May your prosperity abound. 26 I issue a decree that in all my royal dominion, people must tremble in fear before the God of Daniel: *For he is the living God, and he endures forever; his kingdom will never be destroyed, and his dominion has no end. 27 He rescues and delivers; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, for he has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.*"

This chapter started with a prohibition on prayer to God but ends with a pagan King preaching a sermon about God's providence and protection. It's actually a pretty good little mini-sermon. Darius declares that God is:

- **Global** – He's the God of "all the peoples, nations, and languages in all the earth." He's not a tribal deity, only for the Jews. He's not a God about whom you can say, "Well, this is who God is to me, and MY God works for you and YOURS works for you. You can have your truth and I'll have mine." This is one God and one truth for all peoples in all times and at all places. One of the dumbest phrases in our culture is the phrase, "Well, that's my truth." There's *the* truth, and you and I should conform our lives to it, not it to us.

- Secondly, Darius says, he's **Personal** – he's "*the living God*" (not like those Babylonian and Persian gods that cannot speak or relate to humans that you have to carry around from place to place. He is a living, active, speaking God.
- Vs. 26, He's **Eternal** – "*enduring forever*." God, not the King, lives forever.
- He's **Sovereign**: "*his kingdom shall never be destroyed*"
- He's **Faithful** – "*he delivers and rescues*" his people.
- **He's Immanent** – Darius says, "*he works signs and wonders in heaven and earth.*" Immanent means that he is close by, not far away and unengaged. This is not a God sitting above heaven, uninvolved, taking notes so he can judge you one day. This is a God actively at work in the world today.
- Finally, Darius says, he's the **Savior** – he "*saved Daniel.*" This is a rescuing, delivering, powerful God, ready to help all those who call on him.

That's a pretty good little sermon. Daniel is the book in the Bible where we see amazing sermons preached by formerly pagan Kings. And how do they learn these things? They learn them as Daniel and his friends live with consistency and courage. And this is what God promises will happen around us if we live like they did, if we shine in Raleigh-Durham like they shone in Babylon. Warning: Babylon is not a place for spiritual weaklings. But for those who live with wisdom, who live with consistency and courage, they will "*...shine like the brightness of the heavens above... like the stars forever and ever.*" (Dan 12:3)

28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. (who reigned after him).

Two things from this story I want to leave you with:

First, **Courage in the lions' den comes from consistency in the prayer closet.** Like I said, Daniel didn't summon up courage the moment he was thrown in the lion's den. His courage was the result of years and years of small, faithful obedience. Daniel had pre-decided to follow Jesus, and that was demonstrated by consistent, daily times of prayer and obedience in the small things.

- I'm not a prophet, but let me make a prophecy: If you wait until the hour of trial to decide what you'll do, you will fail.
- Do you want to know what you're going to do when you're pressured to give up your faith? Or what you're going to do when everybody around you is doing the wrong thing?
- Or that you'll have the courage to confront a friend who really needs to be confronted?
- Or that you'll have the courage to maintain your integrity when the pressures to cheat are overwhelming?
- Or how about this--do you want to know you'll have the courage to make the sacrifice when God calls you to it? That's when I often feel the most afraid--is when I feel God telling me to do something that is going to require a real leap of faith.
- Do you want to know that in that moment you'll have the courage to do the right thing?
- Look at what you're doing now. Courage to do the right thing is not conjured up in a moment like a magic spell. But if you establish small consistent patterns of obedience--like a daily time to meet with God--then when the hour of trial is upon you, you'll do the right thing. And don't think that you're going to show courage in the big tests if you're not living like a real believer in the small ones. Jesus said that those who are not faithful in the small things won't be faithful in the big ones, either.

- High school and college students, let me talk specifically to you for a moment: You don't wait until the temptation comes to decide how you will respond; you decide well in advance. *Your preparation for the temptation is prayer. Your power over the temptation is found in prayer.* The strength to overcome will be determined by the first thing you do when you get out of bed tomorrow morning. **Is it to get out your Bible and start your day in prayer?**
- That blank in the google search of your heart will not auto-fill with courage unless you have trained your heart through small, consistent acts of obedience. You will never develop courage in the heat of the moment--when the pressure is on, when the world is pressing in on you. **Courage is developed in the prayer closet.**

Second, **Seeing Jesus as the Greater Daniel Is the Strength of Courage**

One of the mistakes people make with this story is they turn it into merely a hero tale, where we leave aspiring to be brave like Daniel: "Dare to be a Daniel!" was how I often heard it. And, as I've shown you, there is certainly much about Daniel's life to emulate.

But that's not the main point of this story, or any Old Testament story, for that matter. **The OT was not primarily written to give us heroes to emulate, but a Savior to adore.** If you try to copy the example of a Daniel, you'll likely end up discouraged--crushed--by your failure. That's how it is for me, at least. No matter how much I coach myself or how many pep-talks I give to myself in the mirror, I can't sustain lasting courage. I may succeed for a moment, but that's usually only to fall back on my face again, more discouraged and hopeless-feeling than ever.

But when you see that Daniel's story, like all stories in the OT, is there to point you to Jesus, this story takes on a new meaning. You see, there's a lot of parallels between what Daniel went through and what Jesus went through. Consider:

- Both Daniel and Jesus are pictures of innocence. Daniel is one of 3 men in the Old Testament about whom there is no mention of a single flaw.¹ The prophet Ezekiel says he is one of the 3 most righteous people ever to live. Jesus, of course, lived totally without sin. No impure thought or motive ever entered his head.
- Both Daniel and Jesus had jealous political leaders drum up false charges against them to get them killed.
- Both Daniel and Jesus had the primary judge in charge (for Daniel, that would have been Darius; and for Jesus, it would have been Pilate) declare them innocent and try to spare them
- Both Daniel and Jesus were thrown into a pit whose entrance was covered by a large stone and sealed with a government seal, left for dead
- Both Daniel and Jesus had loving friends run to their tomb early in the morning
- Both Daniel and Jesus walked out of the tomb alive the next morning
- Both Daniel and Jesus after their ordeal were raised up as 2nd in command over the kingdom (Daniel under Darius in Medo-Persia; Jesus under God the Father in Heaven)

¹ The other 2 are Joseph and Jonathan. Ezek 14:14 also says, "Even if these three men--Noah, Daniel and Job--were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD."

- There is one big difference between Daniel and Jesus, however: Daniel eventually died, but Jesus defeated death and promised to one day raise Daniel from the dead, a promise you'll see in chapter 12 that Daniel clung tightly to his whole life (Dan 12:2)

Sometimes I think we do this story a disservice by reducing it to a kids' story. We have this fun little image of Daniel down there with all the big kittens. But make no mistake: being thrown to the lions was no kids adventure tale.

Lions are vicious creatures: those who live in their proximity know that you can't take them for granted for even one second. I was reading the account of a park ranger in Kruger National Park in South African who is one of the few people in the world to have been attacked by a lion and survived.

He didn't know it, but one afternoon as he was riding his horse through the park he was being stalked by a pair of lions. Suddenly, he said, one lion lunged at him from the grass, barely missing him and knocking the horse out from underneath him. That lion went to work on his horse, when he heard a deafening, horrifying roar from right behind him as this second lion pounced on him. He remembered some of his training and went totally limp, trying to make the lion think he was dead to try and buy him some time. Luckily, he said, the lion didn't grab him by the neck, but his shoulder, which he crushed between his jaws, causing the most excruciating pain, making this whole go limp strategy really difficult. The lion dragged him 60 yards toward his lair. He said "My face was shoved into his mane, the smell was awful, and the lion purred the whole way there." He assumed that was in pleasant anticipation of his meal. Cats are evil, I'm telling you. The man said the whole time he was trying to figure out what to do next when he remembered he had strapped his hunting knife onto his right hip that morning. But the sheath had been broken for a while, and whenever he took any kind of tumble, it had fallen out. Let me just read you his words:

*"It took me some time to work my left hand around my back as the lion dragged me over the ground, but eventually, I reached the sheath and to my indescribable joy the knife was still there! I secured it, wondering where best to stab the lion. I remembered hearing many years before that **if you hit a cat on the nose, he will sneeze**. This particular **theory is of course incorrect**. but at the time I thought it might be true, **though I dismissed the notion, deciding that even if it worked the lion would just sneeze and pick me up again. So, I decided to aim my knife for his heart.** (I moved smoothly and silently as a serpent, because) any fumbling in this maneuver would arouse the lion with **instantly fatal results to myself**. Knowing where his heart was located, **I struck him twice in quick succession**. The lion instantly dropped me and I let out a **furious roar** and **I struck him again, this time upwards into his throat, which severed his jugular and killed him.**"²*

MUSIC

Now, why do I share all this disturbing detail? I'm wanting you to feel just a smidgeon of the horror of a lion attack. This is no gentle kids' story. And I want you to feel that horror because this whole story is a picture of the cross.

² Quote is edited for clarity, flow.

You see, Psalm 22 says that on the cross, Jesus was thrown to the lions of judgment, which circled him, taunted him, and then tore him apart. Jesus was far more innocent even than Daniel ever was--yet before Jesus' body reached the bottom of the pit, he only made it on the cross 6 hours--the lions had torn him to pieces. **No angel came to stand by him and shut their mouths.** To quote Sally Lloyd Jones, "Jesus was left in the blackness utterly alone and abandoned by God, suffering the fate that we, the guilty ones, deserved. God did not shut the mouths of Jesus' lions like he did Daniel's; he let them tear him apart. His body was left entombed in the icy grip of death for three days before the angel finally came to roll away his stone..."

But he was bearing my sin. He went into that pit for me. And, that's where Jesus and Daniel are different. You see, "When Daniel came forth from the lion's den, he came out alone, and no one else was saved by God's deliverance of him. But when Jesus came forth from the tomb, he came out as the head of a mighty company of people who have been redeemed from the pit through his death... Because of the work of Christ on behalf of his people, the divine judge says: 'Not guilty! You may go free!'"³

Jesus, though innocent, voluntarily went into the lion's den of judgment, bearing my guilt. And see, here's the thing: If I know that, and I know he has removed all judgment for my sin, that means that in whatever I am going through now, I can know God is with me, standing beside me, because anything that would have turned him against me Jesus has removed at the cross. And see, then, ***If God is for me, what do I have to be afraid of?*** I don't have to be afraid of those who kill the body, because I have a God who can preserve the soul--and that God is with me in cancer; he's with me when death takes a family member; he's with me in the pain of betrayal; he's with me when I ensure the sting of injustice and persecution; he's with me in every struggle, frustration and failure that I go through, promising never to leave or forsake me, promising to overcome through me, constantly whispering "Greater is he that is in you than anything or anyone in the world." *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear for thou art with me! Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me!"*

Knowing that the Jesus to whom Daniel pointed is with me gives me the courage to be consistent like Daniel, and the ability to get up and keep going when I haven't been consistent. **So thank God for examples like Daniel, but worship Jesus, who went to the Lion's Den in your place and promises to keep and preserve you from any lions you face today.** With him, you can have the courage to face anything.

³ Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*.