

# CHAPTER 6

Daniel does not give a continued history of the reigns in which he lived, nor of the state-affairs of the kingdoms of Chaldea and Persia, though he was himself a great man in those affairs; for what are those to us? But he selects such particular passages of story as serve for the confirming of our faith in God and the encouraging of our obedience to him, for the things written aforetime were written for our learning. It is a very observable improvable story that we have in this chapter, how Daniel by faith “stopped the mouths of lions,” and so “obtained a good report,” <sup><small>Heb 11:33</small></sup> Hebrews 11:33. The three children were cast into the fiery furnace for not committing a known sin, Daniel was cast into the lions' den for not omitting a known duty, and God's miraculously delivering both them and him is left upon record for the encouragement of his servants in all ages to be resolute and constant both in their abhorrence of that which is evil and in their adherence to that which is good, whatever it cost them. In this chapter we have,

- I.** Daniel's preferment in the court of Darius (v. 1-3).
- II.** The envy and malice of his enemies against him (v. 4, 5).
- III.** The decree they obtained against prayer for thirty days (v. 6-9).
- IV.** Daniel's continuance and constancy in prayer, notwithstanding that decree (v. 10).
- V.** Information given against him for it, and the casting of him into the den of lions (v. 11-17).
- VI.** His miraculous preservation in the lions' den, and deliverance out of it (v. 18-23).
- VII.** The casting of his accusers into the den, and their destruction there (v. 24).
- VIII.** The decree which Darius made upon this occasion, in honour of the God of Daniel, and the prosperity of Daniel afterwards (v. 25-28). And this God is our God for ever and ever.

## 261 DANIEL 6:1-5

### DANIEL PREFERRED BY DARIUS

We are told concerning Daniel,

**I.** What a *great man* he was. When Darius, upon his accession to the crown of Babylon by conquest, new-modelled the government, he made Daniel prime-minister of state, set him at the helm, and made him first commissioner both of the treasury and of the great seal. Darius's dominion was very large; all he got by his conquests and acquests was that he had so many more countries to take care of; no more can be expected from himself than what one man can do, and therefore others must be employed under him. He *set over the kingdom 120 princes* (v. 1), and appointed them their districts, in which they were to administer justice, preserve the public peace, and levy the king's revenue. Note, Inferior magistrates are ministers of God to us for good as well as the sovereign; and therefore we must submit ourselves both to the king as supreme and to the governors that are constituted and commissioned by him, ~~261~~ 1 Peter 2:13, 14. Over these princes there was a *triumvirate*, or *three presidents*, who were to take and state the public accounts, to receive appeals from the princes, or complaints against them in case of mal-administration, *that the king should have no damage* (v. 2), that he should not sustain loss in his revenue and that the power he delegated to the princes might not be abused to the oppression of the subject, for by that the king (whether he thinks so or no) receives real damage, both as it alienates the affections of his people from him and as it provokes the displeasure of his God against him. Of these three Daniel was chief, because he was found to go beyond them all in all manner of princely qualifications. He was *preferred above the presidents and princes* (v. 3), and so wonderfully well pleased the king was with his management that *he thought to set him over the whole realm*, and let him place and displace at his pleasure. Now,

**1.** We must take notice of it to the praise of Darius that he would prefer a man thus purely for his personal merit, and his fitness for business; and those sovereigns that would be well served must go by that rule. Daniel had been a great man in the kingdom that was conquered, and for that reason, one would think, should have been looked upon as an enemy, and as such imprisoned or banished. He was a native of a foreign kingdom,

and a ruined one, and upon that account might have been despised as a stranger and captive. But, Darius, it seems, was very quick-sighted in judging of men's capacities, and was soon aware that this Daniel had something extraordinary in him, and therefore, though no doubt he had creatures of his own, not a few, that expected preferment in this newly-conquered kingdom, and were gaping for it, and those that had been long his confidants would depend upon it that they should be now his presidents, yet so well did he consult the public welfare that, finding Daniel to excel them all in prudence and virtue, and probably having heard of his being divinely inspired, he made him his right hand.

**2.** We must take notice of it, to the glory of God, that, though Daniel was now very old (it was above seventy years since he was brought a captive to Babylon), yet he was as able as ever for business both in body and mind, and that he who had continued faithful to his religion through all the temptations of the foregoing reigns in a new government was as much respected as ever. He kept in by being an oak, not by being a willow, by a constancy in virtue, not by a pliability to vice. Such honesty is the best policy, for it secures a reputation; and those who thus honour God he will honour.

**II.** What a good man he was: *An excellent spirit was in him*, v. 3. And he was faithful to every trust, dealt fairly between the sovereign and the subject, and took care that neither should be wronged, so that there was *no error, or fault, to be found in him*, v. 4. He was not only not chargeable with any treachery or dishonesty, but not even with any mistake or indiscretion. He never made any blunder, nor had any occasion to plead inadvertency or forgetfulness for his excuse. This is recorded for an example to all that are in places of public trust to approve themselves both careful and conscientious, that they may be free, not only from fault, but from error, not only from crime, but from mistake.

**III.** What ill-will was borne him, both for his greatness and for his goodness. The presidents and princes envied him because he was advanced above them, and probably hated him because he had a watchful eye upon them and took care they should not wrong the government to enrich themselves. See here,

**1.** The cause of envy, and that is every thing that is good. Solomon complains of it as a vexation that *for every right work a man is envied of*

his neighbour (<sup>2006</sup>Ecclesiastes 4:4), that the better a man is the worse he is thought of by his rivals. Daniel is envied because he has a more excellent spirit than his neighbours.

2. The effect of envy, and that is every thing that is bad. Those that envied Daniel sought no less than his ruin. His disgrace would not serve them; it was his death that they desired. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy?* <sup>1270</sup>Proverbs 27:4. Daniel's enemies set spies upon him, to observe him in the management of his place; they *sought to find occasion against him*, something on which to ground an accusation *concerning the kingdom*, some instance of neglect or partiality, some hasty word spoken, some person borne hard upon, or some necessary business overlooked. And if they could but have found the mote, the molehill, of a mistake, it would have been soon improved to the beam, to the mountain, of an unpardonable misdemeanour. But *they could find no occasion against him*; they owned that they could not. Daniel always acted honestly, and now the more warily, and stood the more upon his guard, *because of his observers*, <sup>1271</sup>Psalms 27:11. Note, We have all need to walk circumspectly, because we have many eyes upon us, and some that watch for our halting. Those especially have need to carry their cup even that have it full. They concluded, at length, that they should not find any occasion against him except *concerning the law of his God* v. 5. It seems then that Daniel kept up the profession of his religion, and held it fast without wavering or shrinking, and yet that was no bar to his preferment; there was no law that required him to be of the king's religion, or incapacitated him to bear office in the state unless he were. It was all one to the king what God he prayed to, so long as he did the business of his place faithfully and well. He was at the king's service *usque ad aras* — *as far as the altars*; but there he left him. In this matter therefore his enemies hoped to ensnare him. *Quaerendum est crimen laesae religionis ubi majestatis deficit* — *When treason could not be charged upon him he was accused of impiety*. Grotius. Note, It is an excellent thing, and much for the glory of God, when those who profess religion conduct themselves so inoffensively in their whole conversation that their most watchful spiteful enemies may find no occasion of blaming them, save only in the matters of their God, in which they walk according to their consciences. It is observable that, when Daniel's enemies could find no occasion against him concerning the kingdom, they had so much sense of justice left that they did not suborn witnesses against him to accuse him of crimes he was

innocent of, and to swear treason upon him, wherein they shame many that were called Jews and are called Christians.

## ~~206~~ DANIEL 6:6-10

### A PLOT AGAINST DANIEL

Daniel's adversaries could have no advantage against him from any law now in being; they therefore contrive a new law, by which they hope to ensnare him, and in a matter in which they knew they should be sure of him; and such was his fidelity to his God that they gained their point. Here is,

**I.** Darius's impious law. I call it *Darius's*, because he gave the royal assent to it, and otherwise it would not have been of force; but it was not properly his: he contrived it not, and was perfectly wheedled to consent to it. The presidents and princes framed the edict, brought in the bill, and by their management it was agreed to by the convention of the states, who perhaps were met at this time upon some public occasion. It is pretended that this bill which they would have to pass into a law was the result of mature deliberation, that *all the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, princes, counsellors, and captains, had consulted together* about it, and that they not only agreed to it, but *advised it, for divers good causes and considerations*, that they had done what they could to *establish it for a firm decree*; nay, they intimate to the king that it was carried *nemine contradicente — unanimously*: “*All the presidents are of this mind;*” and yet we are sure that Daniel, the chief of the three presidents, did not agree to it, and have reason to think that many more of the princes excepted against it as absurd and unreasonable. Note, It is no new thing for that to be represented, and with great assurance too, as the sense of the nation, which is far from being so; and that which few approve of is sometimes confidently said to be that which all agree to. But, O the infelicity of kings, who, being under a necessity of seeing and hearing with other people's eyes and ears, are often wretchedly imposed upon! These designing men, under colour of doing honour to the king, but really intending the ruin of his favourite, press him to pass this into a law, and make it a royal statute, that *whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of the king, shall be put to death after the most barbarous manner*, shall be

*cast into the den of lions*, v. 7. This is the bill they have been hatching, and they lay it before the king to be signed and passed into a law. Now,

**1.** There is nothing in it that has the least appearance of good, but that it magnifies the king, and makes him seem both very great and very kind to his subjects, which, they suggest, will be of good service to him now that he has newly come to his throne, and will confirm his interests. All men must be made to believe that the king is so rich, and withal so ready to all petitioners, that none in any want or distress need to apply either to God or man for relief, but to him only. And for thirty days together he will be ready to give audience to all that have any petition to present to him. It is indeed much for the honour of kings to be benefactors to their subjects and to have their ears open to their complaints and requests; but if they pretend to be their sole benefactors, and undertake to be to them instead of God, and challenge that respect from them which is due to God only, it is their disgrace, and not their honour. But,

**2.** There is a great deal in it that is apparently evil. It is bad enough to forbid asking a petition of any man. Must not a beggar ask an alms, or one neighbour beg a kindness of another? If the child want bread, must he not ask it of his parents, or be cast into the den of lions if he do? Nay, those that have business with the king, may they not petition those about him to introduce them? But it was much worse, and an impudent affront to all religion, to forbid asking a petition *of any god*. It is by prayer that we give glory to God, fetch in mercy from God; and so keep up our communion with God; and to interdict prayer for thirty days is for so long to rob God of all the tribute he has from man and to rob man of all the comfort he has in God. When the light of nature teaches us that the providence of God has the ordering and disposing of all our affairs does not the law of nature oblige us by prayer to acknowledge God and seek to him? Does not every man's heart direct him, when he is in want or distress, to call upon God, and must this be made high treason? We could not live a day without God; and can men live thirty days without prayer? Will the king himself be tied up for so long from praying to God; or, if it be allowed him, will he undertake to do it for all his subjects? Did ever any nation thus slight their gods? But see what absurdities malice will drive men to. Rather than not bring Daniel into trouble for praying to his God, they will deny themselves and all their friends the satisfaction of praying to theirs. Had they proposed only to prohibit the Jews from praying to their God, Daniel would have been as effectually ensnared; but they knew the king would not pass such a

law, and therefore made it thus general. And the king, puffed up with a fancy that this would set him up as a little god, was fond of the *feather in his cap* (for so it was, and not a *flower in his crown*) and *signed the writing and the decree* (v. 9), which, being once done, according to the constitution of the united kingdom of the Medes and Persians, was not upon any pretence whatsoever to be altered or dispensed with, or the breach of it pardoned.

**II.** Daniel's pious disobedience to this law, v. 10. He did not retire into the country, nor abscond for some time, though he knew the law was levelled against him; but, because he knew it was so, therefore he stood his ground, knowing that he had now a fair opportunity of honouring God before men, and showing that he preferred his favour, and his duty to him, before life itself. *When Daniel knew that the writing was signed* he might have gone to the king, and expostulated with him about it; nay, he might have remonstrated against it, as grounded upon a misinformation that *all the presidents* had consented to it, whereas he that was chief of them had never been consulted about it; but *he went to his house*, and applied himself to his duty, cheerfully trusting God with the event. Now observe,

**1.** Daniel's constant practice, which we were not informed of before this occasion, but which we have reason to think was the general practice of the pious Jews.

**(1.)** He *prayed in his house*, sometimes alone and sometimes with his family about him, and made a solemn business of it. Cornelius was a man that *prayed in his house*, ~~411~~ Acts 10:30. Note, Every house not only may be, but ought to be, a house of prayer; where we have a tent God must have an alter, and on it we must offer spiritual sacrifices.

**(2.)** In every prayer he gave thanks. When we pray to God for the mercies we want we must praise him for those we have received. Thanksgiving must be a part of every prayer.

**(3.)** In his prayer and thanksgiving he had an eye to God as his God, his in covenant, and set himself as in his presence. He did this *before his God*, and with a regard to him.

**(4.)** When he prayed and gave thanks he *kneeled upon his knees*, which is the most proper gesture in prayer, and most expressive of humility, and reverence, and submission to God. Kneeling is a begging posture, and we

come to God as beggars, beggars for our lives, whom it concerns to be importunate.

(5.) He *opened the windows of his chamber*, that the sight of the visible heavens might affect his heart with an awe of that God who dwells above the heavens; but that was not all: he *opened them towards Jerusalem*, the holy city, though now in ruins, to signify the affection he had for its very stones and dust (<sup>4924</sup>Psalm 102:14) and the remembrance he had of its concerns daily in his prayers. Thus, though he himself lived great in Babylon, yet he testified his concurrence with the meanest of his brethren the captives, in remembering Jerusalem and preferring it before his *chief joy*, (<sup>4905</sup>Psalm 137:5, 6. Jerusalem was the place which God had chosen to put his name there; and, when the temple was dedicated, Solomon's prayer to God was that if his people should *in the land of their enemies* pray unto him with their eye towards the land which he gave them, and the city he had chosen, and the house which was built to his name, then he would *hear and maintain their cause* (<sup>4188</sup>1 Kings 8:48, 49), to which prayer Daniel had reference in this circumstance of his devotions.

(6.) He did this *three times a day*, three times every day according to the example of David (<sup>4357</sup>Psalm 55:17), *Morning, evening, and at noon, I will pray*. It is good to have our hours of prayer, not to bind, but to remind conscience; and, if we think our bodies require refreshment by food thrice a day, can we think seldomer will serve our souls? This is surely as little as may be to answer the command of *praying always*.

(7.) He did this so openly and avowedly that all who knew him knew it to be his practice; and he thus showed it, not because he was proud of it (in the place where he was there was no room for that temptation, for it was not reputation, but reproach, that attended it), but because he was not ashamed of it. Though Daniel was a great man, he did not think it below him to be thrice a day upon his knees before his Maker and to be his own chaplain; though he was an old man, he did not think himself past it; nor, though it had been his practice from his youth up, was he weary of this well doing. Though he was a man of business, vast business, for the service of the public, he did not think that would excuse him from the daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable then are those who have but little to do in the world, and yet will not do thus much for God and their souls! Daniel was a man famous for prayer, and for success in it (<sup>3444</sup>Ezekiel 14:14), and he came to be so by thus making a conscience of



prayer and making a business of it daily; and in thus doing God blessed him wonderfully.

2. Daniel's constant adherence to this practice, even when it was made by the law a capital crime. When he knew that *the writing was signed* he continued to do *as he did aforetime*, and altered not one circumstance of the performance. Many a man, yea, and many a good man, would have thought it prudence to omit it for these thirty days, when he could not do it without hazard of his life; he might have prayed so much oftener when those days had expired and the danger was over, or he might have performed the duty at another time, and in another place, so secretly that it should not be possible for his enemies to discover it; and so he might both satisfy his conscience and keep up his communion with God, and yet avoid the law, and continue in his usefulness. But, if he had done so, it would have been thought, both by his friends and by his enemies, that he had thrown up the duty for this time, through cowardice and base fear, which would have tended very much to the dishonour of God and the discouragement of his friends. Others who moved in a lower sphere might well enough act with caution; but Daniel, who had so many eyes upon him, must act with courage; and the rather because he knew that the law, when it was made, was particularly levelled against him. Note, We must not omit duty for fear of suffering, so, nor so much as *seems to come short* of it. In trying times great stress is laid upon our *confessing Christ before men* (~~402~~ Matthew 10:32), and we must take heed lest, under pretence of discretion, we be found guilty of cowardice in the cause of God. If we do not think that this example of Daniel obliges us to do likewise, yet I am sure it forbids us to censure those that do, for God owned him in it. By his constancy to his duty it now appears that he had never been used to admit any excuse for the omission of it; for, if ever any excuse would serve to put it by, this would have served now,

(1.) That it was forbidden by the king his master, and in honour of the king too; but it is an undoubted maxim, in answer to that, We are to obey God rather than men.

(2.) That it would be the loss of his life, but it is an undoubted maxim, in answer to that, Those who throw away their souls (as those certainly do that live without prayer) to save their lives make but a bad bargain for themselves; and though herein they make themselves, like the king of Tyre, *wiser than Daniel*, at their end they will be fools.

## ☞ DANIEL 6:11-17

### DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS

Here is

**1.** Proof made of Daniel's praying to his God, notwithstanding the late edict to the contrary (v. 11): *These men assembled; they came tumultuously together*, so the word is, the same that was used v. 6, borrowed from ☞ Psalm 2:1, *Why do the heathen rage?* They came together to visit Daniel, perhaps under pretence of business, at that time which they knew to be his usual hour of devotion; and, if they had not found him so engaged, they would have upbraided him with his faint-heartedness and distrust of his God, but (which they rather wished to do) they *found him on his knees praying and making supplication before his God. For his love they are his adversaries;* but, like his father David, he *gives himself unto prayer,* ☞ Psalm 109:4.

**2.** Complaint made of it to the king. When they had found occasion against Daniel concerning *the law of his God* they lost no time, but applied to the king (v. 12), and having appealed to his whether there was not such a law made, and gained from him a recognition of it, and that it was so ratified that it might not be altered, they proceeded to accuse Daniel, v. 13. They so describe him, in the information they give, as to exasperate the king and incense him the more against him: “He is *of the children of the captivity of Judah;* he is of Judah, that despicable people, and now a captive in a despicable state, that can call nothing his own but what he has by the king's favour, and yet *he regards not thee, O king! nor the decree that thou hast signed.*” Note, It is no new thing for that which is done faithfully, in the conscience towards God, to be misrepresented as done obstinately and in contempt of the civil powers, that is, for the best saints to be reproached as the worst men. Daniel regarded God, and therefore prayed, and we have reason to think prayed for the king and his government, yet this is construed as not regarding the king. That excellent spirit which Daniel was endued with, and that established reputation which he had gained, could not protect him from these poisonous darts. They do not say, He makes his petition to his God, lest Darius should take notice of that to his praise, but only, *He makes his petition,* which is the thing the law forbids.

3. The great concern the king was in hereupon. He now perceived that, whatever they pretended, it was not to honour him, but in spite to Daniel, that they had proposed that law, and now he is *sorely displeased with himself* for gratifying them in it, v. 14. Note, When men indulge a proud vain-glorious humour, and please themselves with that which feeds it, they know not what vexations they are preparing for themselves; their flatterers may prove their tormentors, and are but *spreading a net for their feet*. Now, the king *sets his heart to deliver Daniel*; both by argument and by authority he labours *till the going down of the sun to deliver him*, that is, to persuade his accusers not to insist upon his prosecution. Note, We often do that, through inconsideration, which afterwards we see cause a thousand times to wish undone again, which is a good reason why we should *ponder the path of our feet*, for then *all our ways will be established*.

4. The violence with which the prosecutors demanded judgment, v. 15. We are not told what Daniel said; the king himself is his advocate, he needs not plead his own cause, but silently commits himself and it to him that judges righteously. But the prosecutors insist upon it that the law must have its course; it is a fundamental maxim in the constitution of the government of the Medes and Persians, which had now become the universal monarchy, that *no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed*. The same we find <sup>119</sup> Esther 1:19; 8:8. The Chaldeans magnified the will of their king, by giving him a power to make and unmake laws at his pleasure, to slay and keep alive whom he would. The Persians magnified the wisdom of their king, by supposing that whatever law he solemnly ratified it was so well made that there could be no occasion to alter it, or dispense with it, as if any human foresight could, in framing a law, guard against all inconveniences. But, if this maxim be duly applied to Daniel's case (as I am apt to think it is not, but perverted), while it honours the king's legislative power it hampers his executive power, and incapacitates him to show that mercy which upholds the throne, and to pass acts of indemnity, which are the glories of a reign. Those who allow not the sovereign's power to dispense with a disabling statute, yet never question his power to pardon an offence against a penal statute. But Darius is denied this power. See what need we have to pray for princes that God would give them wisdom, for they are often embarrassed with great difficulties, even the wisest and best are.

**5.** The executing of the law upon Daniel. The king himself, with the utmost reluctance, and against his conscience, signs the warrant for his execution; and Daniel, that venerable grave man, who carried such a mixture of majesty and sweetness in his countenance, who had so often looked great upon the bench, and at the council-board, and greater upon his knees, who had power with God and man, and had prevailed, is brought, purely for worshipping his God, as if he had been one of the vilest of malefactors, and *thrown into the den of lions*, to be devoured by them, v. 16. One cannot think of it without the utmost compassion to the gracious sufferer and the utmost indignation at the malicious prosecutors. To make sure work, the stone *laid upon the mouth of the den is sealed*, and the king (an over-easy man) is persuaded to seal it *with his own signet* (v. 17), that unhappy signet with which he had confirmed the law that Daniel falls by. But his lords cannot trust him, unless they add their signets too. Thus, when Christ was buried, his adversaries *sealed the stone* that was rolled to the door of his sepulchre.

**6.** The encouragement which Darius gave to Daniel to trust in God: *Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee*, v. 16. Here

**(1.)** He justifies Daniel from guilt, owning all his crime to be serving his God continually, and continuing to do so even when it was made a crime.

**(2.)** He leaves it to God to free him from punishment, since he could not prevail to do it: *He will deliver thee*. He is sure that his God can deliver him, for he believes him to be an almighty God, and he has reason to think he will do it, having heard of his delivering Daniel's companions in a like case from the fiery furnace, and concluding him to be always faithful to those who approve themselves faithful to him. Note, Those who serve God continually he will continually preserve, and will bear them out in his service.

## ~~2188~~ DANIEL 6:18-24

### DANIEL'S PRESERVATION AND DELIVERANCE

Here is,

**I.** The melancholy night which the king had, upon Daniel's account, v. 18. He had said, indeed, that God would deliver him out of the danger, but at the same time he could not forgive himself for throwing him into the danger; and justly might God deprive him of a friend whom he had himself used so barbarously. He *went to his palace*, vexed at himself for what he had done, and calling himself unwise and unjust for not adhering to the law of God and nature with a *non obstante* — a *negative* to the law of the Medes and Persians. He ate no supper, but *passed the night fasting*; his heart was already full of grief and fear. He forbade the music; nothing is more displeasing than songs sung to a heavy heart. He went to bed, but got no sleep, was full of *tossings to and fro* till the dawning of the day. Note, the best way to have a good night is to keep a good conscience, then we may lie down in peace.

**II.** The solicitous enquiry he made concerning Daniel the next morning, v. 19, 20. He was up early, *very early*; for how could he lie in bed when he could not sleep for dreaming of Daniel, nor lie awake quietly for thinking of him? And he was no sooner up than he *went in haste to the den of lions*, for he could not satisfy himself to send a servant (that would not sufficiently testify his affection for Daniel), nor had he patience to stay so long as till a servant would return. When he comes to the den, not without some hopes that God had graciously undone what he had wickedly done, he cries, *with a lamentable voice*, as one full of concern and trouble, *O Daniel!* art thou alive? He longs to know, yet trembles to ask the question, fearing to be answered with the roaring of the lions after more prey: *O Daniel!* *servant of the living God*, has *thy God whom thou servest* made it to appear that he is *able to deliver thee from the lions*? If he rightly understood himself when he called him *the living God*, he could not doubt of his ability to keep Daniel alive, for he that has life in himself quickens whom he will; but has he thought fit in this case to exert his power? What he doubted of we are sure of, that the *servants of the living God* have a Master who is well able to protect them and bear them out in his service.

**III.** The joyful news he meets with — that Daniel is alive, is safe, and well, and unhurt in the lions' den, v. 21, 22. Daniel knew the king's voice, though it was now a lamentable voice, and spoke to him with all the deference and respect that were due to him: *O king!* *live for ever*. He does not reproach him for his unkindness to him, and his easiness in yielding to the malice of his persecutors; but, to show that he has heartily forgiven

him, he meets him with his good wishes. Note, We should not upbraid those with the diskindnesses they have done us who, we know, did them with reluctance, and are very ready to upbraid themselves with them. The account Daniel gives the king is very pleasant; it is triumphant.

**1.** God has preserved his life by a miracle. Darius had called him Daniel's god (*thy God whom thou servest*), to which Daniel does as it were echo back, Yea, he is *my God*, whom I own, and who owns me, for *he has sent his angel*. The same bright and glorious being that was seen in *the form of the Son of God* with the three children in the fiery furnace had visited Daniel, and, it is likely, in a visible appearance had enlightened the dark den, and kept Daniel company all night, and had *shut the lions' mouths*, that they had not in the least *hurt him*. The angel's presence made even the lions' den his strong-hold, his palace, his paradise; he had never had a better night in his life. See the power of God over the fiercest creatures, and believe his power to restrain the roaring lion that *goes about continually seeking to devour* from hurting those that are his. See the care God takes of his faithful worshippers, especially when he calls them out to suffer for him. If he keeps their souls from sin, comforts their souls with his peace, and receives their souls to himself, he does in effect *stop the lions' mouths*, that they cannot hurt them. See how ready the angels are to minister for the good of God's people, for they own themselves their *fellow servants*.

**2.** God has therein pleaded his cause. He was represented to the king as disaffected to him and his government. We do not find that he said any thing in his own vindication, but left it to God to clear up his integrity as the light; and he did it effectually, by working a miracle for his preservation. Daniel, in what he had done, had not offended either God or the king: *Before him whom I prayed to innocency was found in me*. He pretends not to a meritorious excellence, but the testimony of his conscience concerning his sincerity is his comfort — *As also that before thee, O king! I have done no hurt*, nor designed thee any affront.

**IV.** The discharge of Daniel from his confinement. His prosecutors cannot but own that the law is satisfied, though they are not, or, if it be altered, it is by a power superior to that of the Medes and Persians; and therefore no cause can be shown why Daniel should not be fetched out of the den (v. 23): *The king was exceedingly glad to find him alive*, and gave orders immediately that they should *take him out of the den*, as Jeremiah

out of the dungeon; and, when they searched, *no manner of hurt was found upon him*; he was nowhere crushed nor scarred, but was kept perfectly well, *because he believed in his God*. Note, Those who boldly and cheerfully trust in God to protect them in the way of their duty shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, but shall always find him a present help.

**V.** The committing of his prosecutors to the same prison, or place of execution rather, v. 24. Darius is animated by this miracle wrought for Daniel, and now begins to take courage and act like himself. Those that would not suffer him to show mercy to Daniel shall, now that God has done it for him, be made to feel his resentments; and he will do justice for God who had shown mercy for him. Daniel's accusers, now that his innocency is cleared, and Heaven itself has become his compurgator, have the same punishment inflicted upon them which they designed against him, according to the law of retaliation made against false accusers, <sup>(6218)</sup>Deuteronomy 19:18, 19. Such they were to be reckoned now that Daniel was proved innocent; for, though the fact was true, yet it was not a fault. They were *cast into the den of lions*, which perhaps was a punishment newly invented by themselves; however, it was what they maliciously designed for Daniel. *Nec lex est justior ulla quam necis artifices arte perire suf* — *No law can be more just than that which adjudges the devisers of barbarity to perish by it*, <sup>(4075)</sup>Psalms 7:15, 16; 9:15, 16. And now Solomon's observation is verified (<sup>(3118)</sup>Proverbs 11:8), *The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead*. In this execution we may observe,

**1.** The king's severity, in ordering their wives and children to be thrown to the lions with them. How righteous are God's statutes above those of the nations! for God commanded that the children should not die for the fathers' crimes, <sup>(6216)</sup>Deuteronomy 24:16. Yet they were put to death in extraordinary cases, as those of Achan, and Saul, and Haman.

**2.** The lion's fierceness. They had the *mastery of them* immediately, and tore them to pieces *before they came to the bottom of the den*. This verified and magnified the miracle of their sparing Daniel; for hereby it appeared that it was not because they had not appetite, but because they had not leave. Mastiffs that are kept muzzled are the more fierce when the muzzle is taken off; so were these lions. And the Lord is known by those judgments which he executes.

## ~~2025~~ DANIEL 6:25-28

### THE DECREE OF DARIUS

Darius here studies to make some amends for the dishonour he had done both to God and Daniel, in casting Daniel into the lions' den, by doing honour to both.

**I.** He gives honour to God by a decree published to all nations, by which they are required to fear before him. And this is a decree which is indeed fit to be made unalterable, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, for it is the *everlasting gospel*, preached to those that  *dwell on the earth*, ~~(64)~~ Revelation 14:7. *Fear God, and give glory to him.* Observe,

**1.** To whom he sends this decree — *to all people, nations and languages, that dwell in all the earth*, v. 25. These are great words, and it is true that all the inhabitants of the earth are obliged to that which is here decreed; but here they mean no more than *every dominion of his kingdom*, which, though it contained many nations, did not contain all nations; but so it is, those that have much are ready to think they have all.

**2.** What the matter of the decree is — that *men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel*. This goes further than Nebuchadnezzar's decree upon a similar occasion, for that only restrained people from *speaking amiss* of this God, but this requires them to *fear before him*, to keep up and express awful reverent thoughts of him. And well might this decree he prefaced, as it is, with *Peace be multiplied unto you*, for the only foundation of true and abundant peace is laid in the fear of God, for that is true wisdom. If we live in the fear of God, and walk according to that rule, peace shall be upon us, peace shall be multiplied to us. But, though this decree goes far, it does not go far enough; had he done right, and come up to his present convictions, he would have commanded all men not only to tremble and fear before this God, but to love him and trust in him, to forsake the service of their idols, and to worship him only, and call upon him as Daniel did. But idolatry had been so long and so deeply rooted that it was not to be extirpated by the edicts of princes, nor by any power less than that which went along with the glorious gospel of Christ.

**3.** What are the causes and considerations moving him to make this decree. They are sufficient to have justified a decree for the total



suppression of idolatry, much more will they serve to support this. There is good reason why all men should fear before this God, for,

- (1.) His being is transcendent. “He is the *living God*, lives as a God, whereas the gods we worship are dead things, have not so much as an animal life.”
- (2.) His government is incontestable. He has a *kingdom*, and a *dominion*; he not only lives, but reigns as an absolute sovereign.
- (3.) Both his being and his government are unchangeable. He is himself *stedfast for ever*, and with him is no shadow of turning. And his *kingdom* too is *that which shall not be destroyed* by any external force, nor has his *dominion* any thing in itself that threatens a decay or tends towards it, and therefore it shall be *even to the end*.
- (4.) He has an ability sufficient to support such an authority, v. 27. He delivers his faithful servants from trouble and rescues them out of trouble; he *works signs and wonders*, quite above the utmost power of nature to effect, both *in heaven and on earth*, by which it appears that he is sovereign Lord of both.
- (5.) He has given a fresh proof of all this in *delivering* his servant *Daniel from the power of the lions*. This miracle, and that of the delivering of the three children, were wrought in the eyes of the world, were seen, published, and attested by two of the greatest monarchs that ever were, and were illustrious confirmations of the first principles of religion, abstracted from the narrow scheme of Judaism, effectual confutations of all the errors of heathenism, and very proper preparations for pure catholic Christianity.

**II.** He puts honour upon Daniel (v. 28): *So this Daniel prospered*. See how God brought to him good out of evil. This bold stroke which his enemies made at his life was a happy occasion of taking them off, and their children too, who otherwise would still have stood in the way of his preferment, and have been upon all occasions vexatious to him; and now he *prospered more than ever*, was more in favour with his prince and in reputation with the people, which gave him a great opportunity of doing good to his brethren. Thus *out of the eater* (and that was a lion too) *comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness*.