



“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt” (Daniel 6:22).

When Human Help Fails

L568. Date: July 1980. **Text:** Daniel 6:12-23, 28.

Topic: Daniel; God: Presence of.

Central Truth: Human strength is not always sufficient; God's power is.

This week's study is a continuation of the lesson studied last week. It is concerned with God's act of delivering Daniel unharmed after he had been cast into a den of fierce lions. Whereas last week's study dealt with the dedication of Daniel to God, this lesson deals with the help of God extended to him when human help is impossible.

Here is the story thus far. Daniel was set as the first of three “presidents” which governed the Medo-Persian Empire under King Darius. The officials under him were jealous of his high position and faithful performance of his duties. They resolved to bring him into disfavor with the king and promote themselves by demoting Daniel.

No fault could be found in Daniel, though they examined the record of his official conduct. They concluded that they must find some way to accuse him in the area of commitment to his God.

The king was told (falsely) that all the presidents and officials of the kingdom wanted to affirm their allegiance to him in a particular way: No request could be made to any person or any god for a period of thirty days. (Daniel was not in on the plan. The enemies were sure he would continue praying to his God as he had before, and they could accuse him.) The punishment set for violation of the decree was that the offender be cast alive into a den of lions.

Daniel knew of the decree. Yet, he continued to open his windows

toward Jerusalem and to pray three times each day. Wicked men spied on him and arrested him in the act of prayer. They went before the king with proof of his guilt.

I. RECOGNIZE THE LIMIT OF HUMAN HELP (6:12-16)

The wicked men who opposed Daniel knew the king would be kindly disposed toward him. They began their accusation by asking the king if he had indeed signed such a decree. He replied that he had, and the decree could not be changed “*according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not*” (verse 12). They had Daniel condemned!

“That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day” (verse 13). The accusation was both true and false. It was true that he made his petition to God three times a day. It was false that he did not respect the king. Daniel was moved by an allegiance to a greater King, the God of heaven.

King Darius was sorry that he had signed the decree by which Daniel was to be condemned. He sought all day to find a way to deliver Daniel from sure death in the den of lions. There was no way to be found. The enemies of Daniel came back and reminded the king that the law could not be changed and Daniel must be delivered over according to the decree.

The king tried to encourage Daniel with the words, *“Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee”* (verse 16). But the words were more of a wish than a conviction.

Daniel was brought to a cave where the lions were kept. He was dropped through a hole in the roof, and a stone was put over the hole to close it. The king's own signet, and the signet of his lords, was placed on it to keep any person from trying to rescue Daniel.

Daniel was in the hands of God. He would live or die according to the purpose of God. Human help was gone.

II. TRUST GOD WHEN ALL HOPE IS GONE (6:6-20)

King Darius encouraged Daniel to trust God, but his words may have seemed weak in the face of the dread danger which Daniel faced. The king was not sure whether God would spare His prophet or not. He passed the night in fasting. No entertainment was brought before him. He could not sleep. Early the next morning, the king hastened to the den of lions to see whether God had spared His servant Daniel.

“O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?” (verse 20). The king's question was asked half in faith and half in fear. He had encouraged Daniel to trust God, saying, *“He will deliver thee.”* But he was not sure whether God was truly able to do it. God would spare him or help was impossible.

It is good to be shut up to God alone. It is well that circumstances arise which are beyond human help. It is in the impossible circumstances that God is shown to be God.

Care must be taken at this point to distinguish between faith and presumption. Daniel trusted God to protect him when he was cast into the place of danger. He did not jump into the lions' den just to prove that God could protect him. The former is faith; the latter is presumption. There is not one Bible promise that God will protect the person who presumes upon Him and steps out in danger just to make God show His strength. But when divine help is needed as one serves God, faith assures the servant that divine help will be given.

III. LEARN THE POWER OF GOD TO PROTECT HIS OWN (6:21-24)

Imagine the delight of the king when he heard a voice from the pit of lions, saying, *“O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me”* (verses 21, 22).

The sound of Daniel's voice from the depths of the den was proof to Darius that God had spared His servant. Daniel was concerned that the monarch know the manner by which deliverance had come. God had sent a supernatural agent, an angel, to deliver the prophet.

Who was the angel which came into the den of lions? The Bible gives no information. It is possible that it was the same one who appeared in the fiery furnace years before and protected the three Hebrews (3:25). Angels are servants of God who do the will of God, one aspect of which is the protection of His people (Psalms 34:7; 91:11; Matthew 18:10; Hebrews 1:14). But sometimes the Angel of the Lord is mentioned as if He were the pre-incarnate Christ himself. Nebuchadnezzar could see the angel in the furnace with the three Hebrews. If Darius could have seen into the darkness of the lions' den, he might have been able to see the angel with Daniel.

What did the angel do to protect Daniel? He *“shut the mouths of the lions.”* That expression must be understood in a figurative way. Lions not only hurt by their bite, but also by mauling the victim with feet and claws. Not only were the mouths of the lions shut, they were also kept from doing

any kind of hurt to the prophet of God. Daniel's reference to their mouths being shut meant that he was fully protected from them.

The deliverance of Daniel was evidently a miracle of God. He was brought up out of the pit and the evil men who had tried to get him killed were thrown to the lions. The beasts leaped upon them and destroyed them immediately. The event teaches that all of life is in the hands of God; His people are safe there.

IV. GLORIFY GOD BY LIVING A LIFE OF FAITH (6:25-28)

The name of God was magnified because of the faith of the servant of God. King Darius issued a decree to all the kingdom which required men to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, “for he is the living God . . . He rescues and delivers, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth; who delivered Daniel from the power of the lions” (see verses 26, 27). Faith in God brought glory to God.

What a testimony to the life of faith! Daniel was brought to the jaws of death because of his faithfulness to God. But God proved to be faithful to him, so Daniel was spared to live and minister longer. It is likely he died about the age of eighty-four. That means his ministry for God continued some seventy years, all of it spent in the foreign land of Babylon where he was prophet to his own people and representative of God in the pagan court. Through all of his life, Daniel testified for God to the glory of God.

Let us learn this lesson well: God cares for His people affectionately and protectively. Knowing the truth of it, live in the light of it to the glory of God.

1. What is the historical setting of today's study?
2. Why was Daniel in trouble with the king?
3. What indicates Darius' faith in God?
4. What can one do when all hope is gone?
5. How would you distinguish between faith and presumption?
6. How was Daniel spared from death and harm?
7. What is the ministry of angels today?
8. How is God glorified by the faith of His people?
9. What does the central theme of the lesson mean to you?
10. How is your faith in God manifest day by day?