

The Silence of the Lions

Daniel 6

Series: Unshakable | A Study in the Book of Daniel

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We are in the last week of our *Unshakeable* series. I hope you have enjoyed this study from the book of Daniel. Next week, we are going to have a special guest with us that I promise you, you are not going to want to miss.

Dr. Robert Morgan will be preaching for me. He is the author of the best-selling book, *The Red Sea Rules*. He's a Teaching Pastor in the Nashville area and is just a wonderful friend. He went with our church on our Holy Land Tour and co-taught with me there...I gave him all the hard places and passages to preach!

He's going to be with us because our *Let's Talk Preaching* conference begins on Monday. We have 250+ pastors coming in from all over North America to focus together on becoming better preachers and teachers of the word. We'll be meeting on the campus of the Lanier Theological Library. We have a few spots open, for those of you that might be interested. You can just text "LTP" to 77069 and we can get you details.

So, be here next week, you will love hearing from and being challenged by Dr. Morgan's preaching.

Today's message is one of those passages that 99.9% of the people here have heard before or at a minimum you are aware of. It has to be one of the most famous stories in all of scripture. Perhaps David and Goliath is the only other story in the Bible that has captured the heart and imagination of people as much as this one does - it's the story of Daniel in the Lion's Den.

If I was making a movie of any Old Testament story...a movie that I think would sell – I would want the rights to this story. It's got all the makings of a great movie:

- There are heroes and villains...
- It has deceit, suspense, and murder...
- There is palace intrigue and power plays...
- And it peaks of course with Daniel (the star...the lead actor...Daniel was in his early to mid 80's at the time, so I'd probably have Anthony Hopkins playing his role)...it peaks with Daniel being thrown into a den of lions and (spoiler alert) being delivered in a dramatic way...

I'd call the movie what I'm calling the message today: **The Silence of the Lions**

I could have gone with, *The Lion King*, but with Anthony Hopkins playing Daniel, it must be the other and as you will see, this is more R-rated than G-rated due to violence. Viewer discretion is definitely advised!

Daniel 6 begins right where Daniel 5 left off. Little to no time has passed, maybe a few months at the most. The Babylonian Kingdom has come to an end and the Medo-Persian Empire is taking over.

A man by the name of Darius is King. Many scholars believe this is none other than the great ruler of the Persians, known as Cyrus. We don't know this is the case, but there is some strong evidence for it.

Now, one of the major differences between these two kingdoms – the Babylonians and the Persians was how they led their kingdoms...how they ruled their empires.

We saw in Nebo and Belshazzar more a strict monarchy, meaning everything funneled through them as it related to power and decision-making in/for the empire. The Medes and Persians, while still a monarchy delegated power out.

This is what we see taking place at the start of Daniel 6. Let's look at it:

Daniel 6:1-2 – “It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps (think governor), to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three high officials (President's cabinet), of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss.”

Enter Daniel – as mentioned last week, Belshazzar brought him out of retirement to interpret the mysterious handwriting on the wall. He's in his early to mid 80's at this time, and just as with every other king Daniel has had contact with, they like him...and more than that they trust him. We see why in (v. 3):

Daniel 6:3 – “Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.”

Now, this is NOT the major point of the message, but I do want to say a couple of things here. First, I want to highlight Daniel's age – he's in his 80's...most think somewhere around 83 and he's still getting it done for the Lord!

He may be slower, but he's still effective. I hope this encourages some senior saints that are here today! It's a lesson that if you're not dead, you're not done!

God STILL has something for you...he's got you here for a reason...for a purpose!

Illus. Senior home – I was visiting with one of our members this week that has been in and out of the hospital and rehab. And they told me, “Pastor, I was ready to go home, but God still has me here. I guess it’s just to encourage people and staff here because they need it.”

And that person was right! As long as God has you here, you have work to do for his glory!

- John Wesley was 85 and still preaching 2-3 times a day!
- Billy Graham preached his last crusade at 86, but his last sermon at 95!
- The great missionary advocate, Annie Armstrong labored in her city of Baltimore for the least and underprivileged into her late 80’s!

I could go on and on naming people who in their late 70’s and 80’s didn’t slow down, but kept going for God, and I want to encourage you if you are in that age category and demographic, you are to do the same!

Age is just a number. If you are 27, but going to die at 35 you are old! If you are 65 and not dying until 88, you are relatively young. Age is a number and as long as God has you here, be committed to his purposes and to living for him! You can still make a difference and let me just say right here, “we need you!”

The church needs the example of your faithfulness and longevity in serving the Lord. Now, let me say this as well...in the same breath, as you grow old, grow old in grace!

In other words, don’t me a mean, disgruntled old person that everyone is scared of no one wants to be around! I’ll leave it at that!

Daniel grew old and the Bible says he was recognized because “an excellent spirit was in him”. So, just pulling some insight from this verse AND from previous verses we’ve read in this book, Daniel just seemed to be a cut above the rest. They say the “cream rises to the top”.

Well, this is what it means that he “distinguished himself above all the others”. In fact, if we look at the whole of this book, we can get a glimpse of what I would call: **Godly Character**

What does godly character look like? First, Daniel lives with a sense of:

1. Excellence – The NIV translates this “excellent spirit” as “exceptional qualities”.

Now, we know these were given to him by God (1:9,17) – the ability to interpret dreams, to increase in knowledge and wisdom, but evidently, he nurtured this gifting...these talents.

Daniel didn’t coast on his own abilities, but instead worked hard and cultivated the gifts God had given him. He lived with a sense of excellence – “God, you gave me the gifts and talents I have, I am going to maximize them for your glory” and it paid off! God, lifted him up in the eyes of others.

2. **Honorable** - In every encounter with a king or superior that we see Daniel is always respectful.

Even when bad things happened or when he was called on by God to speak hard truths to those in power, he did so with a sense of giving honor and showing respect. We never see him or hear him criticize those he is serving under – talk about a test of character!

Gregg T. Johnson – “Never is integrity tested more than when one is out of sync with his leader. Loyalty in times of disagreement is the true test of character.”

Daniel was living in a pagan land, serving a pagan king, but did so with honor and dignity.

3. **Trustworthy** – It didn’t matter which king was in charge, Daniel was given prominence and position and power.

And he wouldn’t have been given this or believed in like this on a repeated basis had he not been found faithful at what he was tasked to do. In fact, just look at (v. 4). When those who were jealous came against Daniel, they couldn’t find anything to use against him from a work standpoint. Daniel took care of business!

Daniel 6:4 – “Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.”

4. **Blameless** – “No error or fault was found in him.” One commentator called Daniel the “Mr. Clean” of the Old Testament. He was above reproach.

He lived as Paul commanded the believers at the church in Colossae to– **Col. 4:5a** – “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders...”

Again, this isn’t the point of the message today, but certainly it causes us to slow down and just ask a question of application: Does our life resemble the godly character that Daniel’s did?

Could it be said of us that we are living with a sense of excellence? In our work, are we putting our best foot forward or just getting by? Are we representing Christ in the workplace and at school and in our community in a way that honors him?

- Are we completing assignments on time and doing good work?
- Are we responding to emails and voicemails in an appropriate and timely manner – the little things matter! It communicates excellence!
- Are we building on the gifting God has given us as it relates to our intellect and talents?

What about the honor we show those NOT just serving in positions over us, but below us. Are we respectful? OR are we always complaining and criticizing and pointing out the mistakes and faults of those around us?

Daniel's heart to show honor was really pointing to something deeper in his life and that is that he fully trusted in the Lord –he knew the authority he was under was placed there by God himself, and he fully trusted the Lord! We'll work that out more momentarily.

Are you trustworthy? Do you let your “yes” be “yes” and your “no”, “no”. Do you follow through? Can you be counted on?

We are stewards of what God gives us and EVERYTHING we have – this includes our money and possessions, but also our positions and calling and career – they are to be stewarded in a way that honors the Lord. Are you trustworthy?

Are you blameless? Do you live like Daniel, that if someone wants to find something against you, they are going to come up empty?

- What if they had access to your checking account?
- What if they had access to your scroll history?
- What if they had video of your home life when all the doors are shut?
- What if they could see over your shoulder as you are on your computer searching the internet?

Are you blameless...innocent...are you living as Paul commanded the church in Philippi:

**Phil. 2:14-15 – “Do all things without grumbling or disputing,
15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst
of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world”**

Daniel had godly character that he had been working on developing for years.

It started when he was a young man and now even in his 80's he is rock solid – NOT perfect...NOT holy and without sin, but because of small decisions he has made through the years (resolved) and by refusing to make small compromises...there are not chinks in his armor. Daniel's got godly character.

As we will see in just a moment, he's the same person in public as he is in private. Are you? It's something to think about today.

illus. Lynchburg, VA – spoke to a few hundred pastors and church leaders and I talked to them about their private life. It seems there are pastors falling morally each week and I'm just

burdened by it. What this does to the cause of Christ – it’s heartbreaking...AND it scares me to death!

“God, make us a people who represent you well for your glory!” This is for pastors and preachers, but really it’s for everyone that names the name of Christ!

Let’s continue on. These guys can’t find anything against Daniel from a work ethic or professional relationship standpoint, so they come against him and find “fault” in the only place they can – his faith!

Daniel 6:5-9 – “Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”⁶ Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king (NOT Daniel! They left him out of these plans!) and said to him, “O King Darius, live forever!⁷ All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.⁸ Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.”⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.”

They are flattering the king, and he of course thinks this is a great idea. These guys that went to the king were jealous of Daniel. They KNEW that Daniel wasn’t going to abide by this law. They had been watching him...observing him...watching and observing him do what?

What he had consistently done his whole life! We’ve talked about Daniel’s character, here we get a glimpse of where that character was formed.

Daniel 6:10 – “When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.”

I love that last phrase – “as he had done previously”. (v. 10) is the battleground verse for this entire text. I can’t imagine all that took place in Daniel’s mind and heart between (v. 9) and (v. 10).

This is a BIG deal. The new king is in charge, and he is going to set the tone for his kingship. Here’s the injunction...here’s the charge pronounced through the whole land – “no one can call on any god, but you, Darius for 30 days! No one can show reliance or dedication or worship to any other god except you AND if they do, they are to be thrown to the lions!

While the Babylonians and Medo-Persians ruled a bit differently, the consequences for disobedience, rebellion, or insubordination was just as dark! “Thrown to hungry lions!”

I get the sense that Daniel said in his spirit, under his breath, “Not again. Here we go...another showdown. How many times do I have to go through this!”

It’s NOT something he is looking forward to – a confrontation with another king...it’s NOT something he wants, BUT it’s also something that’s not a hard decision for him because his character has been formed in the secret place.

If he has to choose, he’s done it before, he’ll do it again. Daniel’s going to keep the first commandment – he will only bow down to the one, true God.

I’m sure he prayed...at least I would have, “God, change the king’s heart...don’t let him be led astray by these yahoo’s...don’t let him make this decree.”

But God doesn’t answer his prayer. The Bible says when Daniel “knew the document had been signed”, he goes back to his home and as he enters it, the windows of his chamber were opened toward Jerusalem...and just in seeing that place, it’s almost as if it’s an answered prayer!

If there is any doubt on what he’s supposed to do regarding this injunction seeing that familiar place, reminds him quickly to continue what he’s been doing for years – PRAY.

Now, let’s not move past this too quickly. I want to camp out on Daniel praying because the main point of this passage and I would even say the main point of the Christian faith is for us to learn to(I’ll put it in bold for you): **Trust God**

This is all of life. You want to know what God wants from you? He wants your trust – that’s what faith is! It’s trusting IN the Lord.

And in looking at Daniel’s life, there are two primary ways that trust in God is built and then strengthened.

First: **Spending time alone with God builds trust.**

If you want to grow the trust muscle in your life, it will only come as you spend time alone with God.

You look at Daniel’s life, and if you want to know where the character we talked about was formed...if you want to know the “secret sauce” to what made him the man he was, it was the secret place – his prayer closet.

When this edict went out, Daniel went in. He went into the place that we went three times a day, every day!

Ronald Wallace – “The orientation of his prayer-closet windows was a symbol of the continual tendency of his mind and thought, when not immersed in Babylon itself, to turn towards Yahweh.”

You think, “how could Daniel remain true in this? How did he keep his head on his shoulders? How did he have this courage and conviction?” He prayed! He spent time alone with the Lord and it built his trust in the Lord.

Some of us don’t trust God because we don’t know him! And we don’t know him because we never spend time alone with him. I’m encouraging you today to get alone with the Lord. Have a “secret place”.

When Daniel walked into his room, he got down on his knees, and he prayed. I could preach a whole sermon on prayer right here from (v. 10) – what you do in the “secret place”.

- He got down on his knees (he postured himself in humility and surrender before the Lord)...
- He prayed (I’m sure it consisted of intercession for himself, for God’s glory to be on display)....
- He gave thanks (just think about that! He knows what he’s facing WHEN turned in – he knows his adversaries are watching and yet in this prayer, he’s giving God thanks!)

This blows me away...BUT I also know this is what prayer does. Prayer changes your character...it changes your focus...it changes your asks...it changes your desires...it changes your entire perspective on life.

When you know God because you are spending time with him and you are growing in your trust of him, you start praying things like, “Lord, I trust you. I trust what you’re doing and if this is what you want, you be praised. Even if I don’t understand it, I know it’s for my best and your glory, I thank you.”

Get to the “secret place” and spend time alone with the Lord. This is where trust is built!

Illus. Secret place – “I’ll take care of the sermon”.

Do you have a place that you go to for prayer? The secret place brings power and builds trust and it’s exactly what Daniel needed because he knew he was going to be watched and get turned in and that’s exactly what happens.

By the way, how easy would it have been for Daniel to close the windows? To say internally, “I’ll just do it this way” for 30 days and change the way he was praying! He could have done that but doesn’t.

I believe with one of the commentators, **Dale Davis**: “**Prayer is the way he keeps the first commandment; by prayer he goes on worshipping the true God anyway, and so prayer here is an ‘idol-busting’ activity. And the most tempting idol was not Darius’ quasi-divinity, it may likely have been Daniel’s own security. Daniel had to answer the question:**

What matters most – the worship of God or my safety? His response shows that he so much as said, ‘I must not make an idol of my own safety and so by prayer I destroy that idol.’

Translation: I will trust God with my future. That kind of trust is built only by prayer. And because of his prayer life...because of the secret place which was secret to him, but people were spying on him and watching him, he’s about to enter one of the biggest tests of his life.

And this leads to a second truth about trusting God. See, spending time with God builds trust. But here is a second truth: **Being tested by God strengthens trust.**

Make no mistake...this is a test! This is adversity Daniel is facing, no doubt filtered THROUGH the hands of God and by going through adversity, the trust in God muscle grows.

Illus. Lifting weights – it’s just like lifting weights. The heavier the weights, the more it breaks down the muscle and gets stronger. Same is true with our faith. The heavier the adversity, if we endure, the stronger the trusts muscle gets.

And Daniel is like a body builder by this time...dude is ripped spiritually! He’s been through it – and just a point of interest: 80+ years old and God is still sending him through tests!

We said it earlier! If you’re not dead, you’re not done! Well, if you’re not dead, you’re not done being tested by God either!

Daniel is 80 something and still being tested by God! Tests refine and strengthen our faith. What did Peter write?

1 Peter 1:6-7 – “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

James 1:2-4 – “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

What pleases God is our trust in him...our faith in him...and what builds that trust is spending time alone with him and being tested by him. Note also here: these two things go hand in hand: time alone and enduring testing!

Ronald Wallace – “There is no doubt that what kept Daniel when his trial came was this rigid uninterrupted habit. He had disciplined himself to it day by day for years, and at the hour of crisis the very momentum of the custom itself would have been enough to keep him faithful to it, even if there had been at the moment no living inspirational incentive.”

Prayer and passing the test go together! Will Daniel pass the test?

Daniel 6:11-13 – “Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. ¹² Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, “O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.” ¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.”

I don't know this to be true, but I think Daniel is so in tune with the Lord via his prayer life and time alone with him that even being betrayed and lied about by those that are jealous of him, doesn't get to him.

He's NOT surprised by what's taking place and he has a deep-rooted trust in the Lord...and even when tough times come, he trusts God! He WILL pass the test.

Daniel 6:14-18 – “Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. ¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.” (4x this is mentioned – the emphasis is clear- there are consequences that can't be changed!) ¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!” ¹⁷ And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.”

The king is having a sleepless night...no entertainment...no food...he's fasting because he's so distressed, but not Daniel. He doesn't argue his case, he simply submits himself to God and is thrown to the lions.

Illus. Houston Zoo – (show pic) – wondering what it would be like! Look at what happens:

Daniel 6:19-22 – “Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually (second time he's mentioned that...I'm telling you, people notice when you serve God faithfully and consistently!), been able to deliver you from the lions?” ²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel (some believe this is “THE angel of the Lord” – preincarnate Christ on the scene) and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.”

It's the Silence of the Lions...they were hungry, but their mouths were shut! The following two verses is why I would rate this movie rated R!

Daniel 6:23-24 – “Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴ And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.”

All that has taken place has so moved the king, he makes another edict and in doing so preaches a pretty good sermon himself!

Daniel 6:25-28 – “Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: “Peace be multiplied to you. ²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever (eternal); his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. (all-powerful and sovereign) ²⁷ He delivers and rescues (he saves); he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth (he’s a miracle working God), he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.” (he intervenes and rescues) ²⁸ So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

Big lesson: Trust God. Spending time alone with God builds trust and being tested by God strengthens trust.

Daniel shows us this. Daniel also shows us Christ. You can’t read this passage right without thinking of Jesus...the parallels are amazing.

Like Daniel, Jesus was betrayed. Like Daniel, Jesus was sentenced to death by an earthly, political ruler. Like Daniel, Jesus was put into a cave with a stone rolled over it and sealed. Like Daniel, Jesus came out of the cave alive.

Daniel points us to Jesus. So, let’s keep trusting and following him.

Let’s pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.