

Against the Tide: In the Lion's Den

Daniel 6

Opening Question:

Have you ever felt like the outsider? And when I say “outsider” I mean for whatever reason, you felt like you didn’t belong. Something was different about you compared with the rest of the group. You didn’t really belong. Maybe it’s because you were the lone Dodgers fan in a stadium full of Astros fans--or maybe it’s because you were the only Asian in a predominantly Caucasian school, or vice versa--maybe you felt like an outsider because you were the tallest kid in the class, and you “stood out”. Maybe you’re the only kid without a smartphone in your class. Or perhaps you’re the only single guy or gal in a small group full of married people.

Well, I had a situation like that once--I felt like an outsider when I lived in this small little reservation called Zuni, New Mexico. I was the only Asian teacher in the whole reservation. I was teaching art to a High School in this small town, and I felt like I was in the outside looking in. This wasn’t Kansas anymore, Dorothy. I had to learn a whole new culture--they valued different music, different foods, different religion, and a whole new lifestyle that I had not grown up with. And from the outside looking in, I was thinking--how do I belong? How do I fit in? How do I get the attention of these kids that are so different from me?

Can you resonate with me? And maybe not to an exact degree, but can you imagine a time you felt you were the one on the outside? And for some of you, as Christians who love Jesus, do you feel like you’re sometimes on the outside? Do you feel like because of your faith, you can’t completely relate to your culture and world? Maybe you try to integrate it to your work and school, but still you know those around you think and believe differently than you--Because you have your convictions.

Let’s ask a bigger question--So, if that’s true, if the fact that my faith in Jesus Christ makes me stand out somehow someway...

Big Question: How do I live out my faith as an outsider? Meaning, I do believe in Jesus, my Savior--but how do I reconcile that with my day to day work and responsibilities? What does it look like to live out my faith in a way that wouldn't get me fired from my office? How does it look when I am living out my faith in med school? Do I have to bring a Bible to class or what does that mean? As a mom? As a student? As an employer, an employee, as a human being--in this culture that is continuing to reject this Sacred Book, what is the right way to show and share my faith?

Because let's be honest--there are very wrong ways to do this, right? I'm sure all of us have met somebody that will be tactless in how he or she shares their faith. They'll be pushy and keep bugging their co workers to come to Church. And not "hey you want to visit HCC next week?" But they'll leave voice messages, business cards, Bibles under your desk, sticky notes that says "I'm praying for your salvation daily. P.S. Repent or else!!!" And maybe put Memory Verses under your car windshields...You know, offending and being plain obnoxious!

Well, I exaggerate, but since that's not who we want to be, what's the right way? There's that extreme, but the other extreme is the Christian who is silent all the time. Never speaks up, too afraid to pray in public, and so for lunch time you'll go to the bathroom to pray for your meal and eat in there 'cuz you're too afraid of somebody judging you for praying. Or if your friend at school asks you about God-for the sake of not offending, you'll go "uh....hmm....yeah....yeah.... (nod head) Run away" Ok, that's an exaggeration too, so forgive me--but we have all seen examples of both, and often we struggle to know the balance!

I know I struggle with this tension as the outsider, what is the right way to live out my faith in a culture that is pushing faith away? How do I not offend and how do I not stay silent? How do I not be pushy and how do I not be silent about my Lord Jesus?

Well, those are good questions. And I certainly don't have the answers, so let's look at the text. Three things we can learn from the story in Daniel 6:

- Daniel's Obedient Submission
- Daniel's Offensive Steadfastness
- Daniel's Overcoming Savior

And the hope is that by looking at the interaction Daniel had with his peers and superiors in Babylon, we can learn the lessons God would press on our hearts.

But as with all the heroes of the faith, from Abraham to David to Moses to Paul or Peter, the story doesn't begin and end with them. In our case, we look at Daniel not because of what he has done, but because of what his God did for him. So our mouths should not say "look at what a great guy Daniel is-" but rather "look at the greatness of Daniel's God!" How great a God must be to move a man towards living and sacrificing for Him. We want people to question what is so special and awesome about this God, that somebody would go to great lengths speaking and proclaiming and living out in action for Him. So while we follow the example of Daniel, I hope it points us to God rather than just Daniel himself.

So with that, let's go to our first point--

Daniel's Obedient Submission

6:1-5 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; **2** and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. **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. **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. **5** 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."

So Daniel is this foreigner, captured as an exile living in a foreign pagan land, the Babylonians. As a Jew, he still worships his God--but he's faced with the king and the culture which teaches and believes in idols and self worship. And it's amazing what we see here--

So the king, Mr. Darius, being the high and mighty ruler that he is, appoints other leaders, satraps it says, and then over them high officials. So another word is fancy smart people and really fancy smarter people over people. But you catch v 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" But Daniel, the foreigner, the God-worshipper, the outsider, was recognized. He got even more honor than the Babylonians themselves. An excellent spirit was in him, it says. Clearly not just of Daniel's strength, but God was working behind the scenes in this man.

And a bunch of these fancy smart people and rulers get jealous of Daniel, saying "who does he think he is--this outsider coming in and ruling over us?" So they plot, trying to get him--let's find anything to incriminate him--They want to kick him out so they look for anything that could look bad on him.

V 4 "but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him"--
Woah...So these men go out to find some weakness in Daniel, and they find nothing--nothing to complain about, no mistakes,

no faults...All that to say, Daniel was working hard and working well.

Daniel displayed obedient submission. Yes, obviously obedience to his God, but also obedience and submission to the authority over him. In talking about how to live out your faith as an outsider, this is the first thing we should recognize--There's something to be said about being obedient at your workplace, your school, your governing body and country--

I believe Daniel showed his obedient submission to his captors because he had an obedient submission to his God. How often we are tempted to think that 'as long as I obey God, who cares about the rules of work or our messed up culture?' But Daniel not only obeyed the rules and played within the "lines" of Babylon, being careful to be a citizen, he also excelled. He was an exemplary worker, a responsible man, and in a high position.

Imagine what would have happened if Daniel said "forget Darius, forget those Babylonians--I'll do it my way, and I don't care--" He would've been fired and most likely killed! But it said that he actually did his job--a very important job to an excellent degree. How about you? Do you value these things--such as excellence in the workplace, being obedient to your boss and to your company, maybe following what your school or those over you are asking of you--or do you rebel and say "Ah, that's fine--I can just do the bare minimum, I don't really care for my major or for my career anyway--what does it really matter in the end as long as I'm making a living and that's that"?

I confess that this is an area I feel weak in, and maybe some of you can relate. Would your employer or your teacher or co worker say the same of you that these men said of Daniel? That

they could find no error or fault in your work habit, the way you speak at work, how you carry yourself?

There's a fine line between excellence and legalism, but I wonder if I shouldn't be more aware of the quality of work I do-- from how I talk to youth, to the emails I send out, to the sermons I preach--I know it's not about performance, but I do wonder if I should not be more diligent in doing an excellent job. Not so people can praise me, not so I get a promotion (don't know what that would be--a new desk?) but because a part of my witness is in the work that I do.

But that's as a youth minister--what about you, student--does your study habits or interactions with classmates point to the One true God? That people would notice something different in you, and that they couldn't accuse you of being lazy or cutting corners? Or how about at work, do you tend to gossip or slander your boss? I know all of us do, so it's ok, this is a safe place to confess--Or I know how easy it is to just go to work, do what is expected of me, not engage in any interaction I don't need to, and do the minimum possible. Just enough to get a paycheck, but not enough to where it would make a difference.

I say this not to guilt or shame any of you, because I've been there, and chances are you have too. But are we not in a sense like Daniel--Those of you who are believers, we also have the Spirit of God in us--and the work we do reflects on us as Christians in an increasingly hostile world. Do we work hard to show the glory of God in our work place--or are we content for mediocrity? And no work is too menial, too small--God was glorified in Daniel ruling over a kingdom as much as He was when Daniel was a youth studying and working in lower positions.

And the result? V 5- "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"--How amazing is that? That he would be a man of such reputation, that the only way they could accuse him of something was for his belief? The only thing they found remotely slanderous was the fact Daniel served a different God than they believed.

So let's move to: Daniel's Offensive Steadfastness: If it was only about Daniel being obedient, submissive to his Babylonians-- that would not be enough. It's one thing to show your faith through your work and work ethic, but it's another thing to hold to your convictions. And that is what Daniel did--He excelled at his "work", but also he lived a robust and active faith. Not faking anything or pretending to be one thing Sundays and another on Mondays--so let's read on:

V6-9 **6** Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement[[a](#)] to the king 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.

We all see what's happening--these sly high officials and satraps, they be like: "We gonna find something wrong with Daniel, and we gonna accuse him of this God stuff--we'll make a law" Pretty harsh, but they make this law, with Daniel specifically in mind--If

anybody worships or prays to any other besides to the King, Darius, they will be thrown in the lion's den. And Darius, humbly says: "oh, sounds good to me. I'm pretty hot stuff, that seems only reasonable."

And that's pretty ridiculous, using a made up law--trying to incriminate Daniel. But Daniel being the faithful man he is--we continue in V 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. **11** 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."

Notice how Daniel knew that it was signed--he was not unaware of it, it wasn't hidden from him, it was common knowledge. So knowing the dangers and implications of worshiping God--what does he do?

It'd be one thing to pray or worship out of rebellion- "I'm gonna stick it to the man--this is what I think of your law!" or "I'll never follow rules--I'm a rebel!" But look-Daniel--this is not anything extraordinary to him--he's been praying, three times a day,

consistently, in devotion to his Lord. I could imagine, after all of the commotion he heard about the law that had passed, Daniel gently bowed in humility--wanting to commune with his God. It strikes me that Daniel had such a habit of praying before his God--he seemed unfazed, he was well aware of his fate if he got caught--But he realized the time with his God was so much more precious to him than anything else.

We look at this offensive steadfastness that Daniel exhibited--Not that he was being offensive for the sake of being hostile; Daniel was practicing what he knew to be normal for him: Communing with his Lord. How about for us? What would somebody say of your steadfastness? Your unwavering faithfulness to the spiritual disciplines--would somebody see it as a part of your weekly schedule?

The fact that you value time with your Savior Jesus Christ--weekly by depending on him, thanking him, praising him, crying out to him, being vulnerable to him in confessing your sins--being open about your own heart and its sins--connecting in community to share about your struggles as a maturing Christian, reading your Word--sometimes as a routine, but at other times just soaking in what God's Word has to say--to see the character of God and being amazed--and you sing to God, sometimes in joy, sometimes in despair, in anxiety, in fear, in excitement--you spend the week with the One who matters most--with your precious Savior King Jesus Christ, who saved you from such dirty sins and self love into a life that gives so much more hope and freedom. No more shame, no more guilt--

And you know what? That kind of steadfast faith--you bet it would offend some people. Around the world people are persecuted for walking with our Savior. People are dying, being

locked up for communing together to worship. It's been offensive for thousands of years--the martyrs and heroes of the faith have all counted it worthy --just as Daniel did, many others after him thought it was better to spend time, preaching the Word, reading the Word, proclaiming the Gospel, worshiping Jesus Christ-in baptism in communion, in house church and in missions--So many have counted this God worthy. And their steadfastness continues to inspire many other believers today--And it continues to offend those who are yet blind to the Gospel. We pray though they are opened.

For us--you have to consider is it worthwhile you might offend somebody--Maybe through your devotion to God during the week--perhaps you help out with College students and have many of your weekends busy--your co workers find it strange. Maybe you decide to fast from social media and try to spend time reflecting on God's attributes--people think you are legalistic and out of touch--you are misunderstood--or you pray before a meal, read Scripture during the week--people think it's weird, you're too religious, unrelatable--whatever. Maybe being misunderstood or labeled is one consequence we face, offending people with our steadfast faith.

Point being, we do these things--as Daniel prayed to his God--not to make a show, not to be pushy, not to be somebody we're not--we're being ourselves. This is a normal part of me. The fact you pray and fast--that's normal for you, You spend time every morning praying to God that you can give your anxieties to Him. And every evening you spend time in confession to the same God. Asking Jesus for forgiveness because you turn away from him so often with your struggles and sins--this is an essential part of who you are--you are diligently walking with your God. We do it not to offend for the sake of offending, but along the

way--there are going to be those who oppose the Gospel. And we have to be ok with that. As a people pleaser, I'd like everybody agreeing with me and accepting of what I do--but I have to realize that this book, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is going to offend--and maybe more people than I realize. When I say there is one way to eternal life, one God to believe in, his name Jesus Christ--that is surely going to offend people.

In our tolerance happy culture, sometimes we need to stop trying to make everybody happy. It's hard for me, 'cuz I want people to like me, people to think I'm cool--but if believing and preaching this Word will offend, and it will, then I have to be ok with that. Because people's approval pale in comparison to God's stamp of approval in Christ for me. The world says "why can't you be more tolerant, accepting, aren't all religions the same, why do you have to be so stubborn in your beliefs, why is Jesus the only way? The Bible is so offensive and racist and sexist"--These are things that I'm sure all of you hear; maybe we have to be ok with that. Defending our faith as best as we can, but being careful to not water down our message of this Bible. It says that there is a clear thing as sin, and we are sinners, the fact there is one way to eternal hope through Jesus Christ. People might not accept sin, or Gospel, or this book--But we are sure to be steadfast and faithful in living, breathing, and preaching the Word.

So Daniel, once accepted for his obedient submission to Babylon and to the king, now finds himself in trouble because of his offensive steadfastness to his real King--God almighty. He got in trouble with the officials and now the king-- let's read on from v 14--

“14 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.”

16 Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared[[b](#)] 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.”

So the consequence was that the law that Darius passed stood, he didn't overturn it--and Daniel was to be thrown into a lion's den--to be either dinner or leftover breakfast for some very hungry lions--Darius regretted it to a degree, but too little too late--what he had passed, was set into motion.

Hearing this story is cool when you're a kid, but if faced with a few lions in a dark den, with no weapon, as an old man Daniel would have been, with no escape, I wonder what I would be thinking at that minute.

So let's go to our final point--**Daniel's Overcoming Savior**--If this story was merely about Daniel's obedient steadfastness, he would be the hero and we'd never live up to him. We could never in perfection and be the man or woman that would have a perfect work record and perfect school GPA. Or if it was only about Daniel's Offensive Steadfastness, it would place too much of an emphasis still on our own walk with God. How faithful could I be? How much of a communion do I have to have with God? Do people actually have to be offended by me for me to be a good Christian? So that's why any story, from this good book will always point to the One who matters--the true hero of the story, Jesus Christ. This is about weak people being saved by a strong Savior who overcame--foolish people that fail and yet a wise Savior delivered--sinful people that a gracious Savior chose to forgive.

Verse **19** 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, 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 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." **23** 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.

So what happened to Daniel, thrown in with the hungry lions? The king found him--unharmmed. Not even touched. The mouths of lions did the angels shut, because God had commanded them. And we forget to tell the children when we tell the story that those who accused Daniel--they got punished, and not only them, but their own families--a gruesome little detail we forget to leave out of Sunday School, but understandable--not exactly PG, and maybe King Darius had a bit of a tempter, perhaps...

It said that Daniel put his trust in his God, and thus he was delivered. Daniel was found blameless before his God. Not that he was perfect, for no man can be, but God found him blameless--he gave him grace and treated Daniel, a man just like us--blameless before Him. A simple man with a simple faith--but with an extraordinary God.

It's incredible--what kind of God sends angels to shut the mouths of lions? Why would He care about one person? And it doesn't happen everytime--there have been plenty of times when others were found not so lucky--But the point isn't just in Daniel being delivered, because the focal point once again points to God--the Overcoming Savior.

Read from V **25** 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;

his kingdom shall never be destroyed,

and his dominion shall be to the end.

27 He delivers and rescues;

he works signs and wonders

in heaven and on earth,

he who has saved Daniel

from the power of the lions."

28 So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Even the king, the powerful king Darius, with all his pride and arrogance, uttered that Daniel's God is powerful and enduring forever--He praises God! A pagan, a Babylonian king, this powerful man who wants people to worship nobody else but him, who made a decree that if anybody prays to any other God, he will throw in with the lions--he sings! His heart is changed! He delivers and he rescues--God's kingdom will never end--God who

saved Daniel from the mouths of lions--shows signs and wonders in heaven and on earth! How beautiful is that, that God had a plan; through Daniel trusting in Him, it resulted in this wicked unbelieving king seeing the truth of the real King? In this wicked king, in the pagan empire of Babylon--all heard of God's glory and majesty. What a great God--Many peoples and nations and languages heard of this decree! And still the same today--

God's heart is that those who are still in darkness, all over the earth-- still living in pride and sin--in selfishness--to see that He is a better King! That His arm will reach--He has the power to save, the power to forgive--He overcame death and sin and defeated Satan--He is our Overcoming Savior King--

Do you know this King? Jesus is the better Daniel, who in obedient submission followed His Father's will on this earth, even death to the cross. But in all that he did, was sinless. And his steadfast faithfulness offended the religious people, and he was nailed to the cross. Jesus is the better Daniel because in his submission he lived perfectly and in his steadfastness he died for us sinners. And I encourage you, if you do not know this savior, and want to see what faith and hope looks like, after the service to pray with and talk to our prayer team up here, as we invite you to be a part of Jesus' family.

Perhaps this is of encouragement to others of you--By giving you hope to trust in God--That He alone can save a wicked king and a pagan kingdom. We need to hear that there is hope. That we can trust in the God who has the power to save. As God worked in King Darius, so also he has the power to work in the lives you come in contact with. And God might be doing more than what we can see currently. That co worker or employee might be the one God reaches and saves. Our obedience or our faithfulness

cannot save, but God can. He alone has the ability to save and to rescue--Which should relieve us, as it's not our responsibility to rescue souls--only God alone can do that.

As we asked how we live as an outsider in this world, we need this reminder that as we spur to be obedient and faithful, in the end, God has the ultimate plan. God used Daniel in this scene, and through him God showed Himself and His glory to king Darius and to the Babylon kingdom. So I hope for us, instead of leaning on our own power or works, we can ultimately put our trust and faith in our Saving God--the One who is able to make even proud kings say "He is Lord" and a worldly kingdom go "How awesome is Daniel's God!" By trusting in Him and His sovereignty as we keep faithful and obedient, we know His will and purposes will prevail--and one day every knee will bow, saying "Great is the Lord Jesus Christ"--

So as we return to work this week, or to school, or to parenting and going about our daily tasks--I asked the question earlier of "How do I live out my faith as an outsider"? That we will consider asking these three questions:

Application Questions:

-Are you submissive? In your workplace and as a citizen of this earth, are you exemplary? What is something you can change about your work place pattern or as a student or a parent that could affect your witness for Christ? And consider how that might affect your own witness in your world.

-Are you steadfast? What ways can you be faithful to God during the week? In what way can you grow in your devotion for your Lord? Not to impress anybody else, but just to commune and enjoy Him? And consider how others might be impacted by your faithful communing with Him.

-Do you trust your Savior? Perhaps you are facing a situation where you really cannot lean on anybody else but Christ. And what a beautiful place to be. As we seek to be those outsiders making an impact for Christ in the workplace, in the home, in the schools, in our community and in our city--what ways are we not trusting for God to come through? In what ways can we trust more in His plan and work rather than our own efforts?

So let's surrender all these things to the Lord, let's go to Him in prayer, the faithful and good God that delights to use us to make His Name known. Let's pray: