

PRAYING IN BABYLON

Devotional | March 5, 2023

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discuss: When has God protected you through a difficult situation rather than delivering you out of the situation?

Key Text: Read *Daniel 6:1-28*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in Germany in 1906 to an aristocratic German family. Using his intellectual giftedness to study theology, Bonhoeffer graduated with a doctorate at the age of 21. He pastored a congregation in Spain, then traveled to the United States for more seminary training. Upon returning to Germany in 1931 to pastor a German church, Bonhoeffer was horrified by the rise of Nazism and courageously spoke publicly against Hitler and the persecution of Jews, while many preachers were bowing to Hitler's demands that all churches swear loyalty to him. The Gestapo arrested and imprisoned Bonhoeffer in 1944 for his Christian convictions and his efforts to stop Hitler. Bonhoeffer was executed by hanging in 1945 – he was 39 years old. Bonhoeffer was known for challenging Christians to replace cheap grace with disciplined commitment—an example Bonhoeffer himself set all the way to a martyr's gallows. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's beliefs were recorded in *Letters and Papers from Prison* and *The Cost of Discipleship*, which still inspire and influence Christians today.

In our text for today's lesson, Daniel 6:1-28, Babylon has been conquered by the Persians and King Belshazzar (from Chapter 5) has been replaced by King Darius. The faith and convictions of Daniel, the courageous, uncompromising follower of God, is put to the test by King Darius. Like Bonhoeffer, we'll see Daniel stand for God – even if it meant death.

1. King Darius appoints Daniel as one of the top administrators in the kingdom, but Daniel's jealous enemies seek to trap him (6:1-9).

Daniel's envious enemies did not like the fact that King Darius had promoted Daniel above them (6:1-3), so they set out to bring Daniel down. Unable to find anything in his personal life to bring against him, they concluded that their best chance was to trap him by his faith (6:4-5). They tricked Darius into signing a decree imposing the death penalty on anyone praying to any god except King Darius for 30 days (6:6-9).

Discuss: What key words and phrases do you notice that emphasize Daniel's character in Daniel 1:4,8 and 6:3-4? Why are these traits essential for us to possess if we are going to influence our culture for Christ?

2. Daniel chooses to obey God rather than King Darius (6:10-15).

Daniel is aware of Darius' decree, but he continues his three-times-a-day prayers to God (6:10). His enemies report this to King Darius (6:11-13). Darius realizes he has been tricked, and since he appreciates Daniel's work for the kingdom, he tries unsuccessfully to find a legal loophole to save Daniel from execution (6:14-15).

Discuss: Where is the line for believers when it comes to ignoring or knowingly disobeying laws that restrict religious freedom?

3. **Daniel is thrown into the lion's den to be executed, but God protects him, causing King Darius to worship and honor Yahweh (6:16-28).**

With regret, King Darius ordered for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. Upon returning home, Darius was so troubled he could not sleep (6:16-18). Early the next morning, Darius hurried to the lion's den to check on Daniel. He cries out to Daniel, "Was God able to deliver you?" Daniel replies, "God shut the mouths of the lions!" King Darius was delighted that Daniel was unharmed (6:19-23). Darius, overjoyed, ordered that Daniel (who didn't even have a scratch on him!) be released from the lion's den (6:23). Darius then ordered that Daniel's enemies who plotted against him and deceived the king be thrown into the same lion's den – and they were instantly torn apart by the lions (6:24). Darius then decrees that all people in the kingdom are to fear and reverence Daniel's God, Yahweh (6:25-28).

Discuss: Did Daniel have good reason to trust in God's deliverance, based on his previous experiences with God? Why or why not?

Discuss: What key words and phrases in these verses about trusting God as our refuge during tough times stand out to you: Psalm 46:1; 62:8; 118:8? What does it mean in these verses that God is our refuge?

Discuss: God rescued Daniel – He protected him from wrongful death and so glorified Himself. However, that is not always the case. There have been many faithful followers of God who experienced persecution but were not rescued from death. Hebrews 11:35-40 says,

35 "Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.

36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated

– 38 of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."

Discuss: How does God vindicate His faithful followers and glorify Himself through rescuing some from death, and also through not rescuing some from death?

Discuss: God does not promise to spare every faithful person from harm, but He does promise to always be with them. What key words and phrases in these passages in the Book of Daniel illustrate this truth: Daniel 1:8-16; 2:13-23; 3:8-30; 6:16-22?

For Further Study:

Free online commentary on the Book of Daniel at www.enduringword.com

Answers to questions about prayer at www.gotquestions.org

Current information about persecuted Christians at www.gotquestions.org