

**10** Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. **11** Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. **12** So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions’ den?”

The king answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”

**16** So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”

**17** A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel’s situation might not be changed. **18** Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

**19** At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. **20** When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?”

**21** Daniel answered, “May the king live forever! **22** My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.”

**23** The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

## **Unbreakable**

Today we celebrate Reformation Day. It’s not every day or even year that we get to celebrate 500 years since Martin Luther stood up and questioned the Catholic church. We like to think of Martin Luther as unbreakable. He’s the Chuck Norris of his day. Tough as nails, ready and willing not only to stand up against the papacy but to take on the whole world. He’s so tough he doesn’t flinch when his finger is caught in heavy machinery. He’s the dog’s best friend. He makes wearing shorts look manly no matter what time of year. Why? When he saw forgiveness being sold he took a stand. When he saw that this could cost him his life - he said, “Here I stand. I can do no other.” He seems so unbreakable.

And then when we look at Daniel we see many of the same characteristics as Martin. Unwilling to give in. Unwilling to compromise. It's all or nothing. Daniel ready and willing not only to stand against the Persian empire but a den of lions as well. If anyone could be described as unbreakable certainly it's one of these guys.

But when we look to such, heroes of faith, tough guys, the unbreakables we may try to imitate them and even idolize them. But the danger in doing so is that we may begin to think, "Me take on an empire, a den of lions? If someone comes for my head, I'm quite attached to that. I don't want to put my life on the line." The result is doubt. I'm nothing like them. I'm broken. But if there is one thing these tough guys had in common it was that they understood just how broken they were. They understood and stood on the unbreakable promise of God. That promise held them faithful even in those broken moments of life.

God's people were broken. He had repeatedly warned the people of Jerusalem to repent or suffer the consequences. They ignored God and he had enough. 586 BC signalled the fall of Jerusalem. Babylon besieged the city, raided the temple, and carried off the best and brightest. Just think of what Daniel went through. He was one the first deportees. One of the elites that was carted off because he was well educated and of use to his captors. He had to learn the language and literature of the Chaldeans, Daniel's name was changed from "God is my judge." to Belteshazzar meaning "Bel's prince." Some believe Daniel was made a eunuch. There is no mention of his family. Without sons his name would fade from memory and his lot of the Promised Land would be lost.

Daniel had it all and then... then a godless army besieged his city. Hauled him off to a strange land, strange language, castration. It's a living nightmare but he doesn't break. In spite of all he's gone through Daniel rises the ranks and becomes one with power and authority. *"Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom."* That didn't sit well with some, after all Daniel is a foreigner from among a conquered nation. They tried to dig up some dirt on him but could find none. Finally they realized that if they were to find anything wrong with Daniel it would have to be found in regard to his law. They appeal to the vanity of the king. Let's make a law, *The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lion's' den.* Oh and make it according to the laws of the "Medes and Persians," Unbreakable.

And Daniel defied the law. *When Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.* The trap had been set. They catch him in the act. Daniel could have held off for a 30 days. He could have hidden in the closet. He could have kept his prayers internally. But his prayer was also a confession to others - his confession of communion with God and his trust in God. For him refraining from prayer was as good as a denial of the faith. That was one thing he didn't want to break.

We are blessed. We have so much in America. God has repeatedly called to us, to our country, but instead of turning to repentance we've often turned a deaf ear. Will a world power besiege our country? Will we go to war with others? Will we be carried off into captivity? And if we did, would you break? Because, I doubt I would be so strong. I'm afraid that if I were in the shoes of Daniel or Dr. Luther I wouldn't be found faithful, unbreakable, but broken. If anyone were to look at my life they wouldn't have to dig deep to find dirt.

What about you? When the lions roar, when the questions come, Would you compromise, keep quiet, or confess? The reality is that God's Word will likely be considered "hate speech," (if not already now) in the near future. It's likely that you will experience many of the same difficulties. Already businesses have been forced to shut their doors because of their beliefs. Sometimes the lions are lurking around looking for someone to devour inside and outside the church and we give in, we keep quiet because of the pressure to go along just to get along. Sometimes we are tempted to downplay doctrine.

So when the lions roar do we stand firm or cower in fear? A Christian does not cower. A Christian must not neglect to worship God in order to avoid persecution. We should not compromise the truth by neglecting the worship of God even when worship expose us to persecution and death. Jesus speaks it this way, *Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven* - Matthew 10:32,33.

God calls us to be unbreakable. The book of Daniel serves as an encouragement to those who are broken, carried off into captivity. The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace teaches, "Do not worship false gods." As we arrive in Daniel chapter six we are instructed to, "Worship the Lord your God."

The temptation there is to focus on the three men and not the fourth and say be more like them. And now as we arrive in Daniel chapter six we might focus on Daniel and not the one who shut the mouth of the lion. We may focus on Martin and not the one who gave him strength to stand. The temptation is to look to what is broken to be unbreakable, to look to ourselves to get out of this, but we're broken people.

Daniel is well aware of the fact that he is a broken man. That's why the men found Daniel *praying and asking God for help*. Daniel was seeking favor from his God. Daniel asked God to look upon him with favor and save him, even if he suffers the consequences of disobeying the king's command. Also notice the direction he prays. He prays toward Jerusalem, the place of sacrificial atonement for the forgiveness of sins, the place where God promised to be among his people. This prayer is based on God's promise. As he looks out that window every evening he waits for the fulfillment of God's promise - the return to the Promised Land. A deliverer, a king or a savior arriving from the West to restore and return the people to their land.

But as far as Daniel trusting in his strength, his power, his righteousness - we don't see that. He can't even trust in the King to get him out of this situation. The king is powerless (why pray to this guy) according to the Medes and Persians. All he can do is bless Daniel and pray to Daniel's God - (the only time "living God" is used by a Gentile) for protection. The one who can help. The one who does help. The one who sends an angel. *"Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions.* Daniel was delivered by God. The lions did him no harm and even if they did - God's promise still stands - unbreakable.

God was able to protect Daniel from the mouth of the lion. He was able to protect Dr. Luther as well. Luther lived under a ban for the last 26 years of his life. He was certain he would die a martyr. But his strength to carry on was not his own but that too came from God. Luther was certain that God could save him and so he prayed, "Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness. I am your sin. You became what you were not so that I might become what I was not." Like Daniel, Luther too understood how broken he was. His confidence came from God, Jesus.

The one who was broken in his place. The one who is broken on our behalf for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus was thrown to the lions who had their way with him. He was crucified for standing firm on his confession that he is the Son of God - the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus was broken for us and in our places and yet

being true God he is also unbreakable. He rose from the dead, lives and rule eternally, guiding this world for the good of his church.

So when the lion's roar and cowards condemn you don't look to yourself and your strength, your grit and gumption but look to the lamb for the forgiveness of sins. Like sheep among wolves we dare not depend on our own strength but God's strength. Look to the cross for deliverance. Look to the one who shut the mouths of lions, look to the one who kicked in lion's teeth and see the unbreakable promises of God. There you will find strength and confidence to stand knowing that *nothing in all of creation can separate us from his love. It's unbreakable.*

Although we are broken... although we have denied and compromised the one true faith. God has forgiven us and is able to reform us broken people into a people for God. And when faced with unthinkable challenges and even death we have his promise that he will give us the strength as well as the words to say.

The Reformation is not a pep fest where we pump ourselves up and parade our awesomeness before all people. (We are pretty awesome still the same.) It's a time when we proclaim the truth and point people to the unbreakable promises of God. Not Daniel, Not Martin Luther, Not even Chuck Norris. In face of lions we need to be reminded what the lamb did when he was thrown to our lions. The unbreakable was broken - death was defeated and we hold onto this promise that he lives and rules eternally. The Word the Lord Stands Forever. Thank God for his unbreakable promise. Amen.