Heb. 11:32-38; Dan. 6:1-24; Faith that Stops the Mouth of Lions I. The Challenge to this Faith II. The Statement of this Faith III. The Reward for this Faith

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, there are few beasts that cause terror like the lion. Lions are called the king of the jungle for good reasons. Their power and ferocious attack is well testified. But lions are not native to North America. The closest we come to a lion may be in a zoo- where the lion is quite passive and tame. Even in the circus, the lion is trained and usually obeys. But in the Roman Colosseum, lions were raised to be man eaters. It is this kind of fierce attack that is in view today. Heb. 11 says that by faith, some stopped the mouths of lions. As you will remember, both Samson and David fought lions and overcame them. But Daniel is unique in that the mouths of these lions were stopped. So today we travel forward in the book of Daniel to consider this theme: Jesus Christ shuts the mouth of the lion as He rescues those who look to Him in faith!

**I. The Challenge to this Faith**

In our first point we consider the challenge presented to Daniel’s faith. Remember that in the book of Daniel when we move from chapter 3 which we looked at last time to chapter 6 today, significant time has passed. We are perhaps 70 after Daniel has been brought into Babylon. Daniel, like his 3 friends from last week, was brought into captivity as a young boy. Separated from his family and his home church, he was forced to stand up for his faith while young. Daniel 1 opens with Daniel refusing to be polluted with the meat and wine sacrificed to pagan gods. Daniel will not defile himself, even though he was removed from all that he had known. So Daniel was a boy of faith- perhaps here already at 10 years of age- Daniel would not forget the God for his forefather. So Daniel shares the challenge that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego shared as well. But now, significant time has passed. Daniel 5 ends with the death of Belshazzar and the fall of Chaldean kingdom. To take his place, King Darius the Mede arrives. So we are after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar 1 and 2- after Belshazzar and Cyrus - now we arrive during the reign of Darius. All of this is say that 70 years have passed! According to the vision back in Daniel 2, the head of gold has passed away- now we are in the age of silver chest or the Persian Empire. So many kings have come and gone- kingdoms have been raised up and then toppled over. Only one kingdom will last- only one king will reign forever. And yet, here is Daniel still in captivity! Well into his 80’s by this time, he is still being used by God! Now this is a good reminder, you are never too old to be used by the Lord! Daniel could have said “I am too old for this!” “Let me die in peace- put me out to pasture.” And when trouble comes, he could have made an excuse about his age as a reason to relax his piety. But he is firm in his faith to the end. So if chapter 3 last week focusses on the challenge to your faith when you are young. Chapter 6 this week focuses on the challenge to your faith when you are old! So we find Daniel living a life of faithful obedience in a foreign land. He is useful to the LORD even as he is useful to king Darius. So Daniel is elevated above all others- put in charge of all the affairs of the kingdom as Joseph was for Pharaoh. But this elevation is met with hostility by others. So in Dan. 6:4 the other governors try to remove Daniel by way of investigation. Find something against him- some charge to get Daniel removed. Daniel’s piety has made him some powerful enemies! It is almost like the LORD has said- have you considered my servant Daniel? There is no one like him in all the land! So the Devil focusses his attack. These other rulers moved by jealousy, conceived a plan to get rid of Daniel. They convince King Darius to proclaim a foolish law which forbids anyone from praying to anyone else for 30 days. So in 6:7 an injunction is signed- and made binding as v. 9 puts it. This decree cannot be altered or removed. Everyone who is religious must pray only to King Darius for the next month. Similar to the decree that Nebuchadnezzar made last week- worship the image of man! So wicked men twist the laws of the land to persecute God’s people- nothing is really new under the sun. Again, God’s people have to choose whom they will serve! Or as Acts 5:29 puts it, we must obey God rather than man. So then, will the advanced age of Daniel bring weakness to his faith? With this order of the king be so strong that Daniel will buckle and break beneath it? No, Daniel will obey the LORD as he remains steadfast in his faith. So here again, it is the faith of Daniel that puts him in the lion’s den. Will the lions that surround him by day or the lions in the den by night be able to destroy him? Will the stone at the entrance to the cave keep Daniel in his tomb? Will his lonely night in the cave surrounded by an unseen enemy be his undoing? As Psalm 22:21 prays- “Deliver me from the power of the sword- save me from the mouth of the lion!”

**II. The Statement of this Faith**

Now that we have considered the challenge that Daniel faced because he was a man of faith, in our next point we will see specifically the content of his faith. How do we know from our text that Daniel was a man of faith? Although it is true that he was one of the royal youths taken from Judea- has this faith that Daniel was taught when he was young remained to the end? Yes- for Daniel has true faith- and true faith perseveres to the end! Added to this, true faith is a living and active faith! Daniel is known by his faith- the fruit of his faith is evident to all! He is said in 6:4 to be above reproach. Even his enemies are forced to admit that Daniel was faithful- there was no grounds for complaint against him. Daniel was innocent before God and man- obeying God’s law- loving God above all and his neighbor as himself. This faith is also evident in his prayer- every day at a set time he would pray! V. 10- 3 times a day he would pray for the peace of the city in which he dwells- but also praying for the peace of Jerusalem! He has not forgotten the people of God and he is mindful of the necessary return to the temple. He gave thanks to God as was his custom. From this we can learn that you are never too old to be useful to others- and you are never too old to be consistent in prayer! Daniel was never too busy to pray! One of the first things that tends to be overlooked on a busy day is prayer. But after all these years- the faith of Daniel has not wavered and his faith moves him to pray! Daniel knows that his only source of strength is found in God alone- and he will not neglect the secret chamber or the inner closet of prayer! The default position of Daniel- in good times and in bad- in time of ease or in times of persecution- is to pray! This is how a man of God is known- by his prayer life! One of the marks that sets apart an elder and deacon is this- that they are well thought of by others and that they are men of prayer! So Daniel exemplifies the character traits of a leader of the church. His faith is consistent- he serves God consistently! Continuing on we note in that 6:22 says that He was blameless before God- and again in v. 23- he was delivered because he trusted in his God! This could be summarized in this way- Daniel was saved by grace through faith! Being right with God- justified- because he trusted in the Lord’s coming anointed one. Daniel’s name means- God is my judge. And as a just judge, Daniel’s faith is a justifying faith! So then, true faith is a knowledge and conviction of the truth. It is a deep-rooted assurance of things not seen! Daniel knows that God is real- that He hears the prayers of His people. By faith we know the truth- and the truth has set us free! By faith we know that God exists- by faith we know that our unseen prayers will be answered in God’s good time. Listen to Psalm 71:18- “so even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me. Until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come!” And even though we do not read of this in our passage, we can be sure that Daniel’s pattern of prayer would continue even in the lion’s den. Daniel’s faith was the reason that he was put in the lion’s den- and it would be his faith that would sustain him in the lion’s den. For by faith, the mouth of lions would be shut!

**III. The Reward for this Faith**

And we know that true faith in the true and living God is never in vain! After a restless night, King Darius runs to the lion’s cave and cries out to Daniel- has your God whom you continually serve been able to save you? To this question Daniel answers in v. 22- my God sent his angel and shut the mouths of the lion so that no harm has come upon me. The mouths of the lions were shut- blocked and bolted. The lions were turned into kittens in the presence of Daniel. Daniel was as safe and secure in the lion’s den as he was in his own bed. As we saw last week with the fire, the LORD God shows up and the fire is restrained. This time, the angel is sent from the LORD and the lions are restrained. As you know, the LORD sends his angels to protect His people. Heb. 1:14 says that angels are ministering spirits sent out to serve the elect. And again from Psalm 22:8- He trust in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him; for he delights in him. When you come to trust in the Lord with all your heart, your ways will be directed and your path protected. Those who are in the hands of Jesus cannot be snatched- and will never be removed from His loving care! So as Daniel was lifted out of den, it was noted that not a hair was harmed on his head- no scratch or bite mark was to be seen! So then, by faith, the mouth of lions can be stopped. If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can move mountains! Surely the mouth of the enemy must be sealed when God’s people believe! But not so the wicked! Although the mouth of the lion is stopped for Daniel- the same cannot be said about his enemies. In 6:24, all those who accused Daniel were cast into the den and they were overpowered and crushed- their bones broken to pieces. As it was with the fiery furnace, the enemy is consumed while the righteous are saved! So a secondary deliverance is also had- Daniel is spared from the attack of these wicked men as their own wicked plans are returned on their own head. As the Lord says in Rom. 12, vengeance is mine. I will repay. We need not worry about the end of our enemies- for their end will be swift and just!

God’s people face various trials and specific enemies. Chief among our enemies is the devil- that ancient serpent- the deceiver and accuser of men. The father of lies has often been compared to a lion. As I Peter 5:8 puts it, Satan is prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. The devil wants to tear and rip as many people as he can- taking them to hell with himself. And he wants to annoy and inflict God’s people with as much pain as he possibly can. But take heart- Jesus Christ has overcome the devil! He defeated that ancient lion. The devil’s jaws have been muzzled- He cannot harm us. As I Peter 5 continues, our God will restore, confirm, strength and establish you! Jesus disarmed the rulers and powers and authorities- He resisted the devil and one day will cast the Devil out! Satan has already fallen from heaven like lightning- and one day he will fall into the bottomless pit! So when the lions of this world growl- remember that Jesus has them on a chain! Their mouths are locked shut- they cannot ultimately hurt you! Persevere in your faith- being strong, bold and courageous! For even in the lion’s den, our God is with us!

To conclude, kingdoms rise and fall; and yet the church endures! Nations and their kings come and go- some persecute God’s people while others do not. But God’s people remain standing! They learn to trust in the Lord at a young age- and when they are old they will not depart from the path of righteousness! Jesus Christ shuts the mouth of the lion as He rescues those who look to Him in faith! This world is no friend to our faith- more often than not this world with devils filled threatens to undo us! We will not fear, for his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him. And that Word is our Savior- Jesus.