

What he had done would most likely get him into trouble. He may not have known that. It didn't matter, what he did was the only thing he knew to do. Things had to change. Abuses were out of control and people were getting hurt. When Martin Luther nailed 95 points for discussion up on October 31, 1517 he was doing what he thought needed to be done and whatever happened would be. It was an action that looked brave.

Centuries before Luther, Daniel also took deliberate action. In this case he knew what he chose could and probably would end in trouble. He was aware his enemies were watching and waiting. It didn't matter, there was the principle. This was a matter of the heart. Daniel made the decision. It wasn't based on fear. It simply was him ascending the stairs in his home like he had before and praying to God like he had done many times. It was an action that looked brave.

How did these brave looking actions come to be? Today as we celebrate the Lutheran Reformation we examine the actions of Luther and Daniel. Martin Luther was a Roman Catholic priest who couldn't quite clear his conscience of the guilt his sinfulness produced. Many, including the people he served, looked to their religion expecting to find some relief. Instead what they received was more burden and more guilt. Do this, work harder, try and you'll be okay. How could they get relief from the burden of sin and guilt with those extra burdens? Luther and his people found no relief.

Daniel had a history with God. Years before this event Daniel had been hauled away from his homeland with the rest of his people. He was taken away into captivity but actually lived a pretty good life. Because of his unique abilities he was brought into the king's service. Daniel served faithfully. As he served he rose in power. He became the second most powerful man in the most powerful country in the world. Through it all he continued to give testimony that pointed away from himself. He couldn't take credit for where he was. God had been faithful to him. God had given him his abilities. God deserved the praise.

His enemies grew hateful of Daniel's rise to power and position. They set up a sting operation and succeeded in tricking the king to publish an edict that anyone who worshiped anyone other than the king be thrown into the lion's den. Daniel was now in a spot. Follow the edict and he wouldn't be able to pray to his God but would instead be worshiping an earthly king as god. Disobey the edict by praying to God and show himself disloyal to the king he faithfully was serving. This was truly a no win situation. **"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."** Nothing changed. In fact his enemies counted on Daniel doing exactly what they figured he would. Stick to God. Trust in him. Get fed to lions.

In every way Daniel got himself into the lion's den. There seemed to be no help. The king didn't help, Daniel's enemies certainly wouldn't help, and Daniel couldn't help himself. The king foolishly said, almost out of the corner of his mouth as Daniel walked by sentenced to death by lions, **"May your God, whom you serve continually rescue you!"** That actually doesn't sound so bad. But surely the king didn't believe it. King Darius didn't trust God the way Daniel trusted God. The king had earthly power to rescue Daniel but ended up backing away from confrontation. It was a law, what's done is done. He probably reluctantly sentenced Daniel then sprinkled on a quick "hope your God saves you" to soothe his own conscience. Meanwhile the enemies of Daniel celebrated. Soon he would be lion food and they could all move up one position in rank. Never mind Daniel being able to escape. He could never hold the lions off or shut their mouths once they attacked. As he waited for the inevitable he was in deep trouble.

Pounding the nails on those discussion points, Luther was a man on a mission. The church he was a part of was hurting. He was hurting. And the people around him were hurting. At the time they seemed to be facing lions, and they seemed to be doing it alone. Sin and guilt were eating at them and wouldn't let go. What was worse, the church which was supposed to give relief had turned away from the Word of God. Claiming good works to be the way to pay God back. The church had gotten into a vicious cycle of pointing people to themselves to overcome guilt. Things were in a dangerous place at Luther's time. Spiritually people who turn away from the Bible towards themselves are in a lion's den. Luther and the people he served were in deep trouble.

Your lions and enemies might be different, but no less dangerous. When you fall into a sin and guilt has a hold do you look to yourself for help? It's the way of the world, isn't it? Pull yourself up, help yourself, you have to make it yourself. Self-reliance becomes your enemy. Financial strain bringing your household finances down. Politics at work stressing you out. Bullies or bad grades or both at school. These can lead you right into the lion's den as you figure the burden is on you for relief. The temptation to shortcut maybe even sin is dangerous. You only feel worse when you realize you can't free or help yourself. That's when you get desperate and start to beg God. You might make deals with him, offering to buy his happiness towards you. On top of that you face a world that wants you to give up on the Word of God as the sole source of teaching for faith and life. The world claims it's stupid to believe that old book. You're old fashioned and foolish thinking that's God's Word and not just a bunch of things some men made up. You can't rely on it, can't listen to it, and never follow it. The lions roar and we feel alone in the fight. We get ourselves into deep trouble.

Something miraculous happened inside that lion's den. Daniel was thrown where he should've died. But Daniel wasn't alone. Not at all. He hadn't been alone praying in his upper room. He wasn't alone standing before the king receiving the sentence of death by lions. And he wasn't alone facing the lions. God rescued him. Daniel told the king, *"My God sent an angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight."* How was that possible? Not that the mouths of the lions were shut, that's easy for God the creator of lions to do. How could Daniel say he was innocent in God's sight? That had nothing to do with Daniel and everything to do with God and his promises. God assured Daniel and his ancestors before him that a Messiah would come and be everything they needed to be. God kept him safe not just from the lions in this life but to eternal life too. Daniel believed in the promised Messiah who would get Daniel safely to his heavenly kingdom.

Facing your lions isn't about you. Facing your sin isn't about you. It's about the one with you. You aren't alone. Not ever. God is with you. He sends his holy angels to protect you in physical danger. More important he already sent a Savior, the same Messiah Daniel believed in. We needed a Savior who wasn't in the same situation we were. He could come and rescue us from our deep trouble and deadly sins. Jesus wasn't sinful. So he entered our existence and lived like us but perfectly for us. His life counted for your life and mine. He was in every way our perfect Savior. He was the king who sacrificed everything for us, including himself. His death on the cross and resurrection provide us with a spiritual rescue. Greater than rescuing us from any lion's den, Jesus promises no matter what happens he'll bring us safely to his heavenly kingdom.

Daniel didn't know God would shut the lion's mouths. Luther didn't know God would work through him to reform the entire church. We don't know whether God will allow us another day of life or not. We don't know what car accident, health scare, or other danger is waiting out there for us. But we know our living God. The stories of Daniel and Luther aren't about those individuals. They're stories about God and his keeping them safe. Your story isn't about you, it's about God. Live knowing you don't have to hide the fact you're a Christian. In your actions, treatment of others, and in prayers showcase that. Demonstrate who you trust in. Go confidently through life not overly fearful of what might happen to you physically. Trust in God to protect you, even if he allows physical harm to come to you. His love knows exactly what you need to get you to heaven. That's his entire goal, get you to heaven. He's done what's necessary in Jesus. He'll continue to do what's necessary until you're there.

See, you're never alone. Never. Daniel wasn't alone in the lion's den, Luther wasn't alone as he nailed those 95 discussion points to the door, and you are not alone in your life. Jesus your Savior is with you always. He will ensure that he gets you **safely to his heavenly kingdom.**