CHAMP SPORTS DEVOTIONAL

SPRING 2026

CHAMP Office – 704.341.5387
Weather Hotline – 704.341.5473
www.champsportsinfo.com

Welcome to CHAMP Sports!

Season Schedule

Practices Begin: Week of March 2
Uniform Distribution: Week of March 2
Game Schedules: Week of March 9
Games Start: Saturday, March 14
Spring Break: April 3-9 (No practices or games)
Practices Resume: Friday, April 10
Season Ends: Saturday, May 16

For any questions or concerns,
contact the CHAMP office, **704.341.5387**
champ@calvarychurch.com

Director: Peter Farynyk, 704.341.5340
Assistant Director: Kelly Lamb, 704.887.3689(o)
704.301.6074(c)

Weather Hotline: 704.341.5473
Updated Mon-Fri. at 3:00 PM; Sat. at 7:30 AM

Join us weekly for Sunday morning worship at 9:45 AM in person or via livestream.

Please remember to pray for your team and their families!

Welcome to CHAMP Sports!

Week of March 2-6

This season at CHAMP we are going to talk about the prophet Daniel. What is a prophet? A prophet is someone who delivers God's messages. Sometimes God's messages are good and full of hope. Sometimes God's messages are warnings and full of correction.

As one of God's prophets, Daniel had an exciting and difficult job! It would have been exciting to hear from God, but what about when God asked Daniel to deliver bad news to a powerful king? That would be difficult!

Daniel served under four powerful kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. God had some important messages for each of these kings, and many of these messages were not encouraging! It would have been hard for Daniel to have the courage to deliver bad news to people like Nebuchadnezzar or his son Belshazzar. How did Daniel have the courage to speak hard words to powerful kings? Daniel feared God.

Daniel's name means "God is my judge." When Daniel stood before powerful kings, he wasn't just thinking about the powerful king, he was also thinking about the ALL-POWERFUL God who sits on the throne of the universe. When Daniel thought of God, the kings on earth seemed small in comparison. Sure, Nebuchadnezzar had the power to throw people into a fiery furnace, and Darius and the ability to throw people into the lion's den, but God has so much more power and authority! God is the Judge of all the earth!

What Nebuchadnezzar or Darius could do to Daniel would last for a few minutes or a few years, but what God does lasts forever! Daniel's goal was to please God no matter what. This might mean making powerful kings on earth mad, but Daniel feared God more than he feared them.

When Daniel first came to Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar wanted Daniel to forget about his God—the God of Israel—and adopt the gods of Babylon. In order to help Daniel forget the God of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar changed Daniel's name from Daniel to Belteshazzar. This new name meant "Bel protect his life." Bel was one of the Babylonian gods. So, Nebuchadnezzar wanted Daniel to trust in Bel! Do you think Daniel trusted in Bel?! No! Daniel feared God. Bel was nothing. God is everything. Daniel would trust in the LORD, the God of Israel.

Psalm 37:3
Trust in the LORD, and do good.

Questions: What does the name "Jesus" mean? "Jesus" means "Savior" or "The LORD is salvation."
Why did Daniel fear God more than he feared King Nebuchadnezzar?

Please remember to pray for your team and their families!

An Angry King (Daniel 2)

Week of March 9-14

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, was a smart and powerful man. He had built one of the greatest kingdoms on earth, but he was still just a man.

One night, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. The dream troubled him because he didn't know what it meant. When he awoke from his dream, Nebuchadnezzar commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans come and tell him his dream.

When they came, they said, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation" (Daniel 2:4). But Nebuchadnezzar wasn't impressed with their words. He wanted them to tell him *what* he dreamed so that he could know that they were truly wise men. So, Nebuchadnezzar said, "I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm—if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore, tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation" (Daniel 2:8-9).

However, the thing that the king wanted was impossible, so they said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Daniel 2:0-11).

Nebuchadnezzar was not pleased with this answer, so he decided that he would get rid of all of his wise men. This included Daniel and his friends. When the captain of the king's guard came to get Daniel, Daniel asked what was going on. When Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, told Daniel what had happened, Daniel asked for the opportunity to tell the king what he had dreamed and what the dream meant.

Nebuchadnezzar granted this request. How would Daniel do this impossible thing? Would he just guess? No! Daniel would pray and seek mercy from God so that he could understand the mystery of the king's dream. God answered his prayer! God showed Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel and gave him the interpretation of the dream! What an answer to prayer!

Job 12:13
With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding.

Questions: What is wisdom? How can we get wisdom? [God gives us wisdom when we ask for wisdom: James 1:5.]

Please remember to pray for your team and their families!

A Great Statue

Week of March 16-21

Last week, we talked about how Nebuchadnezzar had a troubling dream and how God revealed that dream to Daniel. What did Nebuchadnezzar see in his dream?

In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a great statue. The statue was exceedingly bright, and its appearance was frightening. The head of the statue was of fine gold; its chest and arms were made of silver; its middle and thighs were of bronze; its legs were of iron; and it is feet were made of a mix of iron and clay.

What was the meaning of this statue? This statue represented four great kingdoms of this world. The first, and the greatest of these kingdoms, was Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, the kingdom of Babylon—the head of gold.

King Nebuchadnezzar lived about 2,600 years ago. Under Nebuchadnezzar, the city of Babylon became the world's richest and strongest city. Nebuchadnezzar liked to build big and beautiful things. He made the walls of Babylon so thick that two chariots could pass by one another on the tops of the walls! He built magnificent bridges and canals so that there would be plenty of water in Babylon. Maybe Nebuchadnezzar's greatest building project was the Hanging Gardens of Babylon—one of the seven wonders of the ancient world!

Truly, Babylon was a great and glorious city. Not only that, but the power of Babylon extended across the world. People knew about Nebuchadnezzar and his military might. However, the kingdoms of this world don't last forever. Only God's kingdom lasts forever! So, even though Nebuchadnezzar had built a great kingdom, it wasn't long before his kingdom faded away and another kingdom arose.

The second kingdom (silver in the statue) was the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. After their kingdom faded in glory, the Greeks (bronze), led by Alexander the Great, became a world superpower. And then, a fourth kingdom appeared (iron and iron and clay). This fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was powerful and terrible and conquered much of the world, but like the three kingdoms before it, it was not God's kingdom! Next week, we will find out what God does to the kingdoms of this world!

Psalm 115:3
Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases.

Questions: How can we learn about what pleases God? [By reading the Book that God wrote!] What kinds of things please God? [The Fruit of the Spirit; Righteousness; Justice; Truth, etc.]

Please remember to pray for your team and their families!

A Stone

Week of March 23-28

Last week, we learned about four rich and powerful kingdoms: Babylon, the Medes and the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans.

In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw each of these kingdoms as part of one great statue. Babylon was the head of gold. The Medes and the Persians were the chest and arms of silver. The Greeks were the middle and thighs of bronze. The Romans were the legs of iron *and* the feet made of clay mixed with iron.

These kingdoms had many things in common, but one major thing that they all had in common was that none them were the kingdom of God. These were all kingdoms ruled over by fallen human beings. These were all kingdoms that would end. They aren't like God's kingdom! God's kingdom never ends!

As King Nebuchadnezzar's dream continued, he saw something incredible happen. He saw as "a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:34-45).

Wow! Can you imagine a stone so powerful that it topples the most powerful nations of the earth and turns them into metal flakes so small that the wind can blow them away? What is this stone? It is a stone that was cut out by no human hand, which means that God cut this stone out! Daniel tells us that this stone is a kingdom that will last forever! This is God's kingdom!

Someday, when this world ends, all the kingdoms of this world will disappear. The only kingdom that will be left standing is God's kingdom!

If this is true, what should we do? God tells us in the Bible that we should, "Set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2). What does this mean? It means that we should focus our attention each day on God and what He wants us to do!

Psalm 95:6
Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

Questions: Why should we worship God? [We were made to worship God!]

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High Honors and Great Gifts

Week of March 30-April 11

Nebuchadnezzar's heart exploded with emotion after Daniel told him the interpretation of his dream. As soon as Nebuchadnezzar understood the meaning of his dream, he "fell upon his face and paid homage [honor] to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. The king answered and said to Daniel, 'Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery'" (Daniel 2:46-47).

Nebuchadnezzar was impressed with Daniel's God. And rightly so! As Daniel prayed, "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him" (Daniel 2:20-22).

After Nebuchadnezzar praised Daniel and Daniel's God, he "gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon."

Wow! Things were going well for Daniel! After his promotion, he was one of the most powerful men in the world! One of the first things that Daniel did after his promotion was ask the king to promote his three friends—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—to positions of power in Babylon. The king agreed, and Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego were appointed to oversee the affairs of the province of Babylon.

Now that Daniel was a powerful man with great wealth, what would he do? What would you do if you had a lot of money and power? Take a vacation? Order some other people around? That's not what Daniel did. Daniel remained at the king's court. Daniel was ready to serve King Nebuchadnezzar as best as he could. Daniel was ready to serve the God of heaven as well as he knew how.

A truly humble person is able to do all things well—whether they are doing big things or little things. What kinds of things has God given you to do? Will you work hard and do your best?

Luke 16:10
One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

Questions: What's a very little thing that that you've been faithful in? What's the biggest thing?

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A Golden Image (Invitation Week)

Week of April 13-18

Nebuchadnezzar's dream must have had a big impact on him because the next thing we see in the Book of Daniel is that Nebuchadnezzar set up a great golden image. This image was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide!

The Bible doesn't tell us if the image looked like Nebuchadnezzar, but it was made out of gold, just like the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Maybe Nebuchadnezzar wanted the people to worship him as the greatest king of all time. Maybe Nebuchadnezzar wanted everyone in Babylon to pledge allegiance to him so that if another king came along, they wouldn't serve the new king. Maybe Nebuchadnezzar just wanted the people to worship Marduk, the great Babylonian god. Whatever the reason, Nebuchadnezzar asked all of the leaders of Babylon to come and worship before the gold image. The penalty for not worshiping the image was that the non-worshiper would be thrown into a burning fiery furnace!

When it came time for everyone to bow down to the image, three men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—didn't bow down! Why not? Because they worshiped the LORD—the one true God. When Nebuchadnezzar heard that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't bow down to his golden image, he was enraged, but he was feeling generous. He would give them another chance! However, when he offered them a second chance, they said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Daniel 3:16-18).

At this, Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury and ordered that the fiery furnace be heated *seven times* hotter than normal. Then he had some of his mighty men bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the fiery furnace! The furnace was so hot that Nebuchadnezzar's mighty men died, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were fine! They were walking around unbound in the fiery furnace! And then, Nebuchadnezzar saw something incredible—a fourth man—an angel—whose appearance was like a son of the gods! Amazing! God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from Nebuchadnezzar. God can save us from sin, death, and the kingdom of darkness! Will you put your trust in God?!

****Coaches, please present "The Gospel" devotion on the next page. If any players on your team respond by praying to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior, have them sign their name in their own handwriting on the card provided. Please return signed cards to the equipment shed. When we follow up with players we will give them their signed card to take home. Thank you!*

Psalm 96:4
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.

Please remember to pray for your team and their families!

The Gospel

Invitation Week Continued (April 13-18)

What is the Gospel? The Gospel is God's good news about His Son Jesus Christ.

What is the good news? The good news is that God sent Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners.

How did we become sinners? By disobeying God. Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Each one of us has also disobeyed God.

> "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

The bad news is that:

> "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a).

The good news is that:

> **"**the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23b).

How do we receive God's free gift?

> "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

What does it mean to "believe in the Lord Jesus"?

It means that we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died to the pay the penalty for our sins, that He was buried, and on the third day God raised Him from the dead. It means that we receive Christ as our Savior and surrender our lives to Him as our personal Lord and Master.

Jesus promised, "Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33). Today, "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

If you want to believe in Jesus and confess Him as your Savior and Lord today, please raise your hand. If you have raised your hand, please pray this prayer with me.

> *Heavenly Father, today I believe in your Son, Jesus. I believe that He died to pay the penalty for my sins and that He was raised from the dead so that I could be justified and receive eternal life in His name. Today, I surrender my life to Jesus as my Lord and Savior, and acknowledge Him before men. Thank you, Jesus, for saving me! Amen.*

Please remember to pray for your team and their families!

Another Dream! (Daniel 4)

Week of April 20-25

One of the great struggles of King Nebuchadnezzar's life was the question, "Who is God?" Was Nebuchadnezzar God? Or was the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego God?

When Nebuchadnezzar saw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walking around in the fiery furnace, he said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire, and Nebuchadnezzar and the leaders of Babylon examined them. They "saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them!" This shocked everyone! The fire that had killed Babylon's mighty men had done nothing to God's servants!

At this, Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way" (Daniel 3:28-29).

It seems like Nebuchadnezzar understood, at this point, that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was the Most High God. But what about Nebuchadnezzar? Was he great too?

After Nebuchadnezzar saw God save Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, he had another dream! In this dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a great tree. "The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it" (Daniel 4:11-12).

The next thing that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream scared him. He saw "a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. He proclaimed aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit'" (Daniel 4:13). What was this tree? Was it Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom? Was it Nebuchadnezzar himself? We'll find out next week!

Isaiah 26:4
Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD God is an everlasting rock.

Questions: Do you believe that the LORD is God Most High? Is the LORD your rock and your salvation?

Please remember to pray for your team and their families!

Nebuchadnezzar Eats Grass!

Week of April 27-May 2

Nebuchadnezzar really liked Daniel. Daniel was good at many things. He was especially good at interpreting dreams. When Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a tree that grew so big that its top reached to the heavens, he called on Daniel to interpret his dream.

At first, Nebuchadnezzar's dream had been exciting and fun. Who wouldn't want to be like a great tree who reached to the heavens? But then his dream had taken a scary turn: "A watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. He proclaimed aloud and said thus: 'Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit'" (Daniel 4:13).

In the next part of the dream, the watcher said, "Leave the stump of the tree's roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him" (Daniel 4:15-16).

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know what his dream meant, but Daniel didn't exactly want to tell him. Daniel said, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies! The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth, whose leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the heavens lived—it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth" (Daniel 4:19-22).

However, the next part was tough: "O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will" (Daniel 4:24-25).

Nebuchadnezzar would eat grass like an ox! Why? So that he would know that the Most High God is in charge. After seven periods of time (probably seven years), God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to stop eating grass and return to being king of Babylon. Wow! What a lesson! Truly, God is in charge!

Psalm 103:19
The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

Questions: Why did God make King Nebuchadnezzar eat grass? Where is God's throne?

Please remember to pray for your team and their families!

Belshazzar's Blunder (Daniel 5)

Week of May 4-9

Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar's son. One would think that after watching his dad eat grass, Belshazzar would have learned something about God, but sometimes people are hardheaded and they don't learn very quickly.

Belshazzar decided to host a great feast. He commanded that the golden cups that his father, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the LORD's house in Jerusalem be brought so that everyone at the party could drink from them. These golden cups were God's special cups. They had been used for holy and special purposes when they were in Jerusalem. Now Belshazzar was using them to party. Even worse, as Belshazzar and his guests drank from these cups, "they praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone" (Daniel 5:4). Truly, Belshazzar had learned very little about the Most High God!

As Belshazzar and his guests were praising the gods of gold and sliver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, something terrible and awesome happened. "The fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace. Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, 'Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.' Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed" (Daniel 5:5-9).

The wise men of Babylon couldn't read the writing on the wall, but guess who could read the writing? That's right, Daniel! King Belshazzar called for Daniel to come and tell him what the writing on the wall meant. When Daniel came, he said, "Belshazzar, though you knew all that God did to your father, Nebuchadnezzar, you have not humbled your heart, but you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven." Then Daniel said, "This is the interpretation of the handwriting on the wall: God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians" (Daniel 5:22-26).

What's the lesson for us from Belshazzar's life? We must humble ourselves before God and honor Him!

Revelation 19:1
Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.

Questions: Why did Belshazzar decide to host a great feast? How can we humble ourselves before the Lord?

Please remember to pray for your team and their families!

Daniel and the Lion's Den (Daniel 6)

Week of May 11-16

After God divided Belshazzar's kingdom between the Medes and the Persians, the new king, King Darius, the Mede, decided to keep Daniel in a position of power. Darius put 120 governors in charge of the kingdom, and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one.

Daniel worked hard in his new job. He did such good work that it became clear to everyone that Daniel was King Darius' best employee. This made people jealous of Daniel, so they began to study Daniel's life so that they could find something wrong with him. However, after careful study, they couldn't find anything wrong with Daniel's life or work, so they came up with a wicked plan. They said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5).

Daniel loved God. Three times a day, Daniel would go to his house, which had windows that opened towards Jerusalem, and he would pray to the LORD, the God of Israel. When his jealous co-workers realized that Daniel prayed to the LORD every day, they went to King Darius and said, "'O King Darius, live forever! 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. 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.' Therefore, King Darius signed the document and injunction" (Daniel 6:6-9).

Daniel knew that the document had been signed, but still he went to his house, got down on his knees, and prayed. Of course, you know who was waiting and watching to see if Daniel would break the king's new law. That's right—everyone who was jealous of Daniel! When they saw Daniel praying, they immediately went to King Darius to report that Daniel was breaking the king's new law. This made King Darius very sad. He had been tricked by jealous men into signing an unwise law, and now he had to throw Daniel into the lion's den!

When Daniel was thrown in the lion's den, Darius said, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" And that's exactly what happened! Because Daniel trusted in his God, the LORD sent His angel to shut the mouths of the lions, and they did no harm to Daniel! Truly, God is great!

Psalm 56:11
In God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Questions: Who is the Judge of all the earth? Will the LORD judge the world in righteousness? [Yes!]

Please remember to pray for your team and their families!