

Living by Faith During Exile

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[0 : 00] We have another wonderful story this morning, so let's read. It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps to be throughout the whole kingdom.

! And over them three high officials of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account! so that the king might suffer no loss. Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom. But they could find no ground for complaint or any fault because he was faithful and no error was found in him.

Then these men said, We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.

Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, O king Darius, live forever! All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counsellors 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.

[1 : 32] 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. When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem.

He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God.

Then they came near and said before the king concerning the injunction, O king, did you not sign an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man within thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?

The king answered and said, The thing stands fast according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked. Then they answered and said before the king, Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.

[2 : 55] Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel, and he labored till the sun went down to rescue him.

Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.

Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you.

And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting. No diversions were brought to him and sleep fled from him.

[3 : 57] Then at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver

you from the lions?

Then Daniel said to the king, O king, live forever. My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him.

And also before you, O king, I have done no harm. Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him.

Because he had trusted in his God. And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions, they, their children, and their wives.

And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces. Then king Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied to you.

[5 : 14] I make a decree that in all my royal dominion, people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For he is the living God, enduring forever. His kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.

He delivers and rescues. He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth. He who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, and the reign of Cyrus, the Persian.

This is the word of the Lord. Well friends, we have another wonderful story this morning from the book of Daniel, don't we? Why don't I pray before we get into it? Sovereign Lord, thank you that your word has everything we need for lives of godliness.

Please teach us through this story this morning that we may trust you more and live your way.

Amen. So as we come this morning to the final narrative section of the book of Daniel, let's remind ourselves of what we've seen so far.

We started back in chapter 1 in the year 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and carried away its people into exile.

[6 : 36] And among them was a young boy, about 14 or 15 years old, by the name of Daniel. And Daniel spent the rest of his teenage years being trained as a wise man of Babylon.

And despite being a prisoner in a foreign land, he continued to trust in his God. The God who always comes through.

The God who always delivers. He quickly became noticed when God revealed to him Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation, when all the wisdom and magic of Babylon failed. Daniel, by trusting in God, quickly became honoured among the kingdom. His friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, also trusted God in the face of death, refusing to disobey him by bowing down to the king's golden image.

And God delivered them from the fiery furnace. Daniel, years after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, in the year 539 BC, proclaimed God's judgment on Babylon and on King Belshazzar, who failed to learn the lesson of his father and instead arrogantly exalted himself before God.

[7 : 58] That very night, the king was killed, the kingdom of Babylon ended, and Darius the Mede received the kingdom. So Daniel is now about 80 years old, he has spent his entire life in exile, and who could blame him for giving up hope of deliverance?

But as we'll see today, Daniel is still faithful to God, trusting him to redeem his people from exile, but more than that, to redeem his people and bring them to the true promised land.

See, coming across to the New Testament, Peter picks up this exilic language in his first letter, and he addresses it to God's elect exiles, to Christians.

And he says in 1 Peter chapter 1, sorry, I don't have any slides this morning, so if you want to turn with me to 1 Peter 1, feel free. Okay. 1 Peter 1 verse 17, he says this, And if you call on him as father, who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

[9 : 51] So in Daniel 6, we see that Daniel's faith and hope are in God. He's at least 80, so even if the return to Jerusalem comes soon, he'll only get to enjoy a few short years there before he dies.

So what has kept him so loyal and faithful to God? I think he trusts that God's kingdom will endure forever. He is waiting for the day when the Most High God who rules over the kingdom of men will give it to the lowliest of men and that man will reign over it forever.

His kingdom shall never be destroyed and his dominion shall be to the end. He is waiting for that man to be made manifest. And we have the privilege of knowing that man, don't we?

His name is Jesus and the kingdom has been given to him and soon the stone that will grow into a mountain and destroy all the other kingdoms and be established as the only kingdom and that kingdom shall never be destroyed.

But for now, Daniel and we have to wait. So today's passage is all about living by faith during exile.

[11 : 11] What does it look like to trust in the God who delivers when the world around us wants to silence, seize and even slaughter us precisely because we trust in him?

We have seen time and time again, haven't we, how Daniel has trusted God despite the God-rejecting and danger-filled world and society around him.

His situation in many ways is not unlike ours, is it? We too live in a world and society that has rejected God and increasingly is seeking to silence and seize us, seize those who remain faithful to him.

And even if we aren't facing jail or death for gathering here this morning, the secularists have made it seem normal to just leave your faith at the door, haven't they?

You can be a Christian, you can pray, you can read the Bible, just not in this office, not in the classroom, not in this hospital ward or this job site or this cafe.

[12 : 20] do it on your own time but don't bring your faith into this part of your life. So as we look at Daniel and we see him living by faith during the exile, let us be emboldened to live as exiles here, waiting for our king to return and serving him while we wait.

So today I want us to see that Daniel remains faithful to the God who delivers even in the face of death. And so for us to be emboldened to live as exiles here, serving the true King Jesus and trusting that he will deliver us.

Alright, let's jump into it. So we enter the story with Darius newly in charge. He sets about appointing satraps over his kingdom, 120 of them.

And satraps are like vice regents, governors, each in charge of an area. And over them, he appoints three high officials of which Daniel was one. So already we see that despite the regime change, Daniel is still prospering.

And I think this is meant to show us that Daniel, since he serves the most high God who rules over the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will, the God who has set up Darius the Mede as king, Daniel is impervious to regime change.

[13 : 45] While Babylon is gone and the Medes and Persians are now in control, well, ultimately God was in charge and still is. And it is him that Daniel serves before any earthly king.

But notice that Daniel is faithful to Darius as well. This Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps because an excellent spirit was found in him and the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

Daniel has proven faithful to the king and worthy of this exalted position. It doesn't take long though for those who seek to exalt themselves become jealous of this.

His opponents immediately set about trying to find a way to accuse him and get rid of him but they can find none. Why? Because he was faithful.

He was dutifully serving the king and when it came to his position in the kingdom they could find no ground for complaint or error or fault to bring against him.

[14 : 56] And so they conclude that they must instead find it in connection with the law of his God. They agree together and come to the king. O king, live forever they say.

All the high officials there were only three and Daniel was one. All the high officials of the kingdom the prefects and the satraps the counsellors and the governors are agreed that the king should enforce an ordinance and yeah I'm sorry should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction that whoever makes petition to any god or man except to you O king for thirty days shall be cast into the den of lions.

O king you should be the only one people bring requests to. Exalt yourself O king you be the only deliverer for your people. Have them all pray only to you on penalty of death by lions.

And the king of course likes this idea and he's following the pattern of the kings before him isn't he? Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and now Darius seek to exalt themselves as the only supreme power the only one who can deliver the only one worthy of worship and bringing petition to and so Darius agrees and the trap is set.

Daniel has been faithful to God so far what will he do now? It brings us to verse 10 when Daniel knew that the document had been signed he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem he got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he had done previously.

[16 : 58] What's the first thing you would do if someone told you you can't pray anymore? Well you'd pray wouldn't you? You'd immediately turn to God for help and ask for his strength and that's exactly what Daniel does he acts in faith despite and even because of the injunction that the king has signed despite knowing the consequences of disobeying that order Daniel continues to be faithful to God he shows his faith in God by turning to him and making petition he pleads to God and that's what prayer is isn't it?

It's making petition and it shows faith in God because he trusts that God can fulfill his plea and he's praying toward Jerusalem because of the words of King Solomon in 1 Kings 8 so let's turn to 1 Kings chapter 8 and this is where Solomon has built the temple and is commissioning it so 1 Kings 8 verse 46 if they sin against you for there is no one who does not sin and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy far off or near yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors saying we have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly if they repent with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who carried them captive and pray to you toward their land which you gave to their fathers the city that you have chosen and the house that

I have built for your name then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea and maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you and all their transgressions that they have committed against you and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive that they may have compassion on them for they are your people and your heritage which you brought out of Egypt from the midst of the iron furnace!

So what we see here in Daniel 6 is that Daniel is doing exactly what a godly exile should be doing he is praying toward Jerusalem toward the city that God has chosen to make his name dwell there pleading with God for mercy and rescue from exile he is showing faithfulness to God even when the death penalty looms if he is caught it would have been quite easy for Daniel to make an excuse wouldn't it God will understand if I do this I might die I won't pray to Darius of course but I just won't pray at all for 30 days just for these 30 days and friends aren't we tempted in the same way when our secular world would seek to silence us leave your faith at the door you can be a Christian on your own time when those around us even our government would seek to deter us from praying as is currently law in some parts of our country Christians can face jail for praying for people even those who ask for it but Daniel knowing all this chooses to remain faithful to God and so must we notice this isn't just an act of defiance it says as he had done previously he is carrying on in his faithfulness to God then these wicked men who set the trap they who used Daniel's faithfulness against him come and catch him in the act and the dramatic irony here is that Darius the one who sought to exalt himself as the only one worth bringing petition to the only one able to deliver well he fails to deliver

[21 : 43] Daniel from his own edict Daniel is delivered over he is thrown into the den of lions the stone is placed and sealed and then Darius himself pleads to God may your God whom you serve continually deliver you and so we end this section on a cliffhanger darkness den sealed lions in the shadows a deep chest rattling growl we see Darius a king who failed to deliver unable to sleep or eat will Daniel's God be able to deliver him day breaks and the king makes haste to the den oh Daniel servant of the living God has your God whom you serve continually been able to deliver you from the lions tension!

Tension hangs in the air a silence that lasts only for a moment but feels like a lifetime going from beneath a voice O king live forever my God sent his angel and shut the lions mouths and they have not harmed me because I was found blameless before him and also before you O king I have done no harm then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den so Daniel was taken up out of the den and no kind of harm was found on him because he had

trusted in his God Daniel remained faithful he trusted that God would deliver him and the God who always comes through did it again he saved Shadrach Meshach and Abednego from the flames of the furnace and he saved Daniel from the den of lions no smell of fire was found on them and not a scratch was found on him he was not harmed because he did no harm he trusted in

God the only God who can deliver and God delivered where Darius failed the most high didn't harm but those did do harm the other two high officials harm comes to them according to the NET footnote there's an ironic play on words here and it's the same phrase that came up in chapter 3 verse 8 the words maliciously accused and if you remember back to chapter 3 Josh pointed out to us that in the Aramaic it means to eat the pieces of or we might say instead of they maliciously accused him they tore the shreds off him so those who tore the shreds off Daniel themselves had the shreds torn off them literally it's horrific it's poetic God's justice often is they get exactly what they had intended for

Daniel and I call it God's justice because he is the one sovereignly in control of all things and we've just seen that he is able to shut the lions mouths so this judgment is enacted by him the God who delivers delivers Daniel from the mouths of the lions and from the hands of his enemies brings us to our final section Darius makes a decree and this should make us think back to chapter four and Nebuchadnezzar's decree he starts it in a very similar way King Nebuchadnezzar says King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples nations and languages that dwell in all the earth peace be multiplied to you and Darius starts in the same way then King Darius wrote to all the peoples nations and languages that dwell in all the earth peace be multiplied to you

Darius sees and admits that it is the God of Daniel who is the living God his kingdom will last forever he is the one who delivers and rescues the one who saved Daniel from the mouth of the lions And then this kicker in verse 28 so this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian the name of the one who God promised to raise up to redeem his people from exile has appeared right Jono showed us last week that Darius and Cyrus are probably the same person and I agree and then this verse shows us that that fact I think that Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius the reign of Cyrus the Persian one and the same so all along this has been the

[27 : 08] Messiah promised in Isaiah 45 Cyrus God's anointed servant Isaiah says he shall build my city and set my exiles free not for price or reward says the Lord of hosts God has appointed Cyrus to deliver his people from exile we've seen that Darius by his own strength couldn't even deliver one man from his own ruling but the God who delivers will use him to deliver his people from exile and if from the Babylonian exile then how much more will he deliver his people into his eternal kingdom as he has promised so it's time to wrap up and return to Peter's letter to the elect exiles and he starts his letter in the same way as Nebuchadnezzar and Darius did in chapter 1 verse 2 he says grace and peace be multiplied to you so come with me to 1

Peter chapter 3 starting in verse 12 I think I've written down the wrong reference I'm sorry 1 Peter 4 verse 12 sorry about that chapter 4 verse 12 so so so so!

so so! Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God. And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. The Most High rules over the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.

[29 : 42] He gave it to Darius, to Cyrus, to deliver his people from exile. And he has given it to the lowliest of men, Jesus the King, who will reign forever, through whom we will be delivered from exile and are redeemed into his eternal kingdom.

Let us live by faith in him now. Even if we should suffer for it, let us entrust our souls to our faithful creator while doing good. Let's pray.

Most High God, we thank you that you have given the kingdom of men to the lowliest of men, to Jesus.

Thank you that it is through him that we have deliverance from this exile into your eternal kingdom.

Please help us to keep trusting him, to live by faith in him during the time of our exile, to not succumb to the pressures and pushes of this world that would seek to silence us, to seize us, or even if they seek to slaughter us.

Help us to hold fast to faith in Jesus, knowing that one day soon we will be delivered. In Jesus' name, amen.