

Overcoming Envy and Political Hardship, Part 3

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[0:00] We began looking a few weeks ago here at Daniel and the reality of the circumstances that he had! when those that were in authority alongside him were envious of what was going to happen.

! But let's go ahead and if you found Daniel chapter 6 this morning, we'll pick up here in verse 1. We'll read down through this again just to refresh our memory and then we'll get back into our lesson here and Lord willing get that finished up here this morning. But it says, it pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 princes which should be over the whole kingdom. Now if you remember that was Darius was a new king and Daniel was going to be was chosen to continue on into a new kingdom which of itself is a pretty unique thing because normally you know if somebody was conquered they didn't take the counselors from the previous king. You know that it was most of them were usually put to death historically but notice this is, and over these three presidents of whom Daniel was first that the princes might be given account accounts unto them and the king should have no damage.

Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes because of an excellent spirit was in him and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. You know we see Daniel's testimony. You know he actually got promoted you know it's like okay I'm going to set you with three and then I'm going to put you over I want to move you up to over everything including those three and so we're going to see here what takes place in verse 4 because we see the envy that takes place. And the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom but they could not find none occasion nor fault for as much as he was faithful neither was there any error or fault found in him. You know here's Daniel's second testimony that we talked about is the fact that he they couldn't find a fault in how he managed and oversaw the king's affairs.

[2:11] You know politically today we know that's not an easy thing to do when somebody looks at everything examines everything's hey we can't find anything. This guy's upright he's doing what he ought to do but notice what they did and then verse 5 then said these men we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. And then the presidents and princes assembled together to the king and said unto him King Darius live forever. All the presidents of the kingdom and the governor and the princes and the counselors and the captains have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for 30 days save of thee O king he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now O king establish the decree and sign the writing that it be not changed according to the law of the Medes and the Persians which altereth not wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed he went into his house and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his god. And we notice at the end of verse 10 some point as he did what? A four time. In other words things changed around Daniel but Daniel didn't change his relationship with God. Daniel stayed the same. And so we're going to see here as we saw that Daniel was a man of character. You know we we looked at the fact that Daniel had been dealing with this his whole life as a young man as he was taken into captivity. If you remember that he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. In other words he

says I'm going to keep myself right before God. That was his priority. And in doing so he was going to do what was right before his responsibilities here. And we see as Daniel did that and Daniel's captivity and things how he served and we saw the timeline of Daniel and we see what how God used Daniel in a mighty way. But we see these individuals moved with envy. You saw the first point there was that mandate against Daniel. The mandate that was there and this ungodly envy that they had. You know what? People are going to be envious of what you have in Christ. They're going to want to tear down. You know they're going to want to destroy. And we see that if you're doing what's right you know what? People want to tear you down. If you're trying to be honorable and do honorably there's going to be people who won't stand against you doing honorably.

You know why? Because not because of what you're doing it's because it makes them look bad. You know you'll find oftentimes that's the problem. It's like slow down a little bit. You know this is not making the rest of us look good. They're not concerned about right. They're concerned about how is it making me look or what I want to accomplish. You know but I want you to understand that there are times when ungodly people plot against Christians. It's not because they've done it we've done anything wrong but because we're trying to please God. That we're trying to do what's right. You're going to find even today a lot of things that take place are the people have a hatred of the things of God.

You know and you're going to find that if you take a stand as a Christian there's going to be sometimes people just don't like you. I mean I remember back when I was in the you know working full time and you know there was times I had to come to a reality. There's times you're going to find people that just don't like you.

They don't like what you believe. They don't like what you stand for. It just ruffles their feathers the wrong way. You know and just I want you to understand that you have to understand that's going to take place and keep a right spirit and a right attitude about it because you need to turn that over to the Lord to deal with it and continue to do what you're supposed to do. Let God deal with it because the reality is going to happen but we see their faithful testimony in Daniel. You think about that they couldn't find any fault in him. You know so what did they do? They went after his relationship with God. They said hey we know this is an area that we have to find a problem in his life to cause a conflict in his life. Because I want you to understand sometimes this is we see with Daniel is people that what they choose is to create a conflict with what you believe with what's expected. Now let's just throw something out there. One of the things you saw in my lifetime I've seen people move from where Sundays was a sacred day to where people say if you don't work on Sunday you don't work here. What's taking place? They're taking what you deem important and say well if you're going to earn a living here this is what you're going to do. Now I want you to understand there are some jobs that just require people to work on the Lord's day. I mean that's just a fact. There's certain functional things that just must happen. But general business doesn't have to happen on the Lord's day. What do they do? It's all about money. You know you got to choose between money and your God. You know that's really what they're asking. Are you going to be obedient to God or obedient to your pocketbook? You know and we can talk about some more of that later but you know we see here that what they do. They came and flattered the king. The one in charge and they began to cause a conflict within the kingdom and they wanted to cause a conflict of loyalty. You know because think about what are some situations in which you might be required to choose between loyalty to Christ and to be accepted by the world? You know stop and think for a moment. What are some other, I mentioned one, what are some others that we face? It's an open question. Daryl?

[8:25] Yeah. Okay. Matt? Yeah. Yeah. I mean they want to try to make that be a conflict between those things. What are some others?

Anybody got anything else? You guys just live conflict-free lives, right? Yeah. And Okay. Trying to force instruction.

Well, it's, but it is a challenge because sometimes people intentionally do that though, especially like with Daniel, to try to usurp or to cause a conflict. But you know, we're going to learn from Daniel how do we deal with those things. How do we walk through those things and how we work through

those dynamics. And so, but we want to see here the mandate against Daniel, but also we talked about the ministry of Daniel because notice what he did. He prayed. You know, we have a lot of conflict today that people want to stir up. I mean, that's a, people's first thing is, how much, how much problem can I stir in and about something instead of looking at what does God have for me to do and to turn to God first? I mean, you think about this today, you know, how many rallies do we see today? Everybody thinks something's unjust. And so we're going to rally, get a rally and get a bunch of people and a bunch of signs and we're going to scream and we're going to yell.

You know what? The one thing you never find Daniel did was gather a bunch of others and try to make a point. Even in his early life, the three others that joined with him, they made the choice to join with him. And I want you to understand that they weren't forced to do that. They made a choice to do so.

And I think it's good when people choose to do things together, especially for the Lord, because we find encouragement with one another, but our primary encouragement ought to be the Lord, ought to be what God would have. And when he prayed, we talked about that, you know, the reality of prayer, but it was a planned prayer that Daniel did. You know, I notice as we look back here at verse 10, it says, as he did aforetime, you know, Daniel knew this was signed and what'd he do? [11:12] He said, I have a scheduled time with God and I'm going to go spend time with God. He says, I'm going to take care of those things and turn them over to God and let God deal with it.

You know, he prayed and gave thanks before his God. You know, Daniel knew this was going to be a problem, but yet he still continued to do what he always did and said, God has it under control. Because remember at this point, Daniel was probably about 80 years old. When this was taking place, Daniel was about 80 years old. When he first got brought into Babylon, he was probably a young teenager or in his mid-teens. You know, he saw a few things in life and I think he understood that God can take care. You know, when we realize the importance of prayer, you know, oftentimes instead of getting all worked up, the best thing we can do is take it to the Lord. Seek God for guidance and let God work through those things. And, but we notice here that Daniel interceded, you know, he prayed towards Jerusalem. He did it because this is what they were instructed to do in the scripture for him, to pray for Jerusalem, to pray for the people, to pray for God, to forgive the people that had sinned.

You know, Daniel perpetually recognized it wasn't just his sin, but the sin of the people that had brought them to that place. And he said that I need, we need to turn to the Lord. You know, it was a diligent prayer, but it was habitual. You know, he had a habit of it. Daniel didn't start a prayer life when things were signed. You know, Daniel didn't go run to the Lord for the first time in six months to say, hey, Lord, there's a problem now. He was doing the same thing he always did. Daniel's pattern underscores the importance of consistency in our spiritual habits before those practices are under attack. You know, you can, you can withstand things when you're prepared to withstand them. When things spiritually are in place in your life to deal with it, you know, think about the impact of people, you know, just a few years ago, we had mandates that, oh, we can't gather together.

You know what? People that didn't already have a faithful attendance began to avoid coming to church. You know why? Because they didn't have any conviction about it to begin with. If it's convenient, we'll come. If it's not convenient, we won't come. And, you know, it wasn't something that they did and thought was a priority. You know, the same is true. If you're not already reading and studying the scriptures, it's unlikely to begin when the Bible begins to be looked down upon. And there's coming a day very soon, I think, the Bible's going to be looked at as hate speech. There's already other places in the world that this is taking place. What are you going to do with your Bible when they don't like it? They already don't like it. What are you going to do when they pass laws against it? Those decisions are made now, not in the moment. The priority is placed. And we see here that Daniel had a plan to that, a consistency that gave him stability in the midst of the situation. You know, he was a prepared persecution.

[14:43] You know, Daniel's conspirators waited with bated breath for him to break the mandate. You know what? He was so consistent, they knew he was going to do it. Ever thought about it? They knew exactly.

I believe they were probably standing across on the other side, gawking out the window, saying, he's going to do it. Yeah, he's going to do it. No, I don't think he'll do it. I will. And you know what?

It's interesting because Daniel prayed with the windows open.

Just as he always did. He said, guys, go ahead and watch. You're not going to impact my relationship with my God. Daniel made a clear statement. You know, we talked about a little bit last time.

Look over quick again to Psalm 37. Psalm 37 and verse 32. You know, we see here this. It says, the wicked watches the righteous, which is very true. People pay, if you live for the Lord, people are going to have their eye on you. It says, and they seek it to slay him.

You know, there's going to be people looking to tear down your testimony, to tear down your relationship with God. And we see this taking place. And notice verse 11, back in our text there in Daniel chapter 6, it says, and these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. And then they came near and spake before the king concerning the king's decree. Thou hast not signed a decree that every man that hath asked a petition of any God or man within 30 days, save thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions, asking according to the law, the Medes and the Persians with altars not. You know, when you read this text, it's interesting because I think they got the thing signed and they went right down the street to Daniel's house.

[16:28] You know, I think part of the problem with this is, as we see when it comes to Darius, the king, Darius realized that the ink wasn't dry yet and they were already fulfilling the plot that they had.

And we're going to see this as he's there and it tells him what's going to happen. And the king was beside himself. Notice in verse 14, then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased within himself. You know, Darius said, hey, I just got chumped. I just got played by these guys. Now I'll give you a little clue. This probably tells us what happens later on in the story and why it happens. Because when you mess with the king and try to trick him, it probably is not going to end well for you. Because we're going to see what happens here. Because notice, and he set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men assembled unto the king and said unto the king, know, O king, that the law of the Medes of the Persians, that no decree nor statute which the king established may be changed. When the king commanded that they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions, now the king spake and said unto Daniel, thy God whom thou service continually, he will deliver thee. Now, I want you to see here, why did Darius see such an excellent spirit in Daniel? Blue?

Yeah, I mean, you see, the king wasn't shy about the fact of what Daniel believed. He fully understood it. He said, matter of fact, you'll see here, you might use this term today, respect.

You know, he might not have believed in Daniel's God, but he respected Daniel and Daniel's God. Because he said, there's something different about it. You know, Darius expressed a confidence that God would deliver Daniel. You know, think about that. Thy God whom thou service continually, he will deliver thee. You know, think about that statement. Imagine the judge standing there. It's like, hey, you know, we got to do this, but God's going to deliver you. Kind of an awkward moment, you might say.

Verse 17, the stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his Lord's, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

[19:10] You know, we find this dynamic, the mandate against Daniel, the ministry of Daniel, and we find the message throughout Daniel here. The message was this, of Daniel, how God delivered what seemed impossible.

How Daniel trusted God in the midst. Turn to Psalm 37 again. Psalm 37, look down in verse 40. Psalm 37 in verse 40, we find here, it tells us this, it says, and the Lord shall help them and deliver them, and he shall deliver them from the wicked and save them because they trust in him. You know, God helped Daniel. He did it in a way that sent a powerful message of his care and ability to deliver. You know, throughout the book of Daniel, I want you to understand some things because sometimes we'll read these accounts and say, well, why doesn't God deliver miraculously me like he did Daniel? Why doesn't he solve my problem like he did Daniel's problem? I want you to understand, trusting God says, God, I don't know what your choice of outcome is going to be, but I know it's going to be the one that's needful, the one that's best. Think about

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Remember what they told the king before they were thrown into the fiery furnace? Basically, hey, we don't know what's going to happen here, but rest assured, we're going to trust our God no matter what. Whether we die in the furnace or we don't, that's up to

God. It's not up to us.

So I want you to understand, just because people say, well, I trust God and things ought to work out the way we think it ought to work out, I want you to understand that's not always the case. It's going to work out according to God's will, not our will. God had a statement he was making in this.

God helped Daniel. He did it in a way that did deliver a powerful message because we see here the king. It spoke to the king that even when situations are outside our control, we can know that God is always in control. Think about Proverbs 21.1 where it says the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord.

[21:28] Think about that. God directs things. God guides things. We certainly see God's work in King Darius' heart as Daniel gets thrown into the lion's den. Notice here in verse 18, of our text. And the king went before his palace and passed the night fasting, neither were instruments or music brought before him. And his sleep went from him. And when the king rose up very early in the morning and went in haste under the lion's den. And when he came to Daniel, he cried with lament, with a lamentable voice under Daniel. Now, I'll just give you a little clue that that word lamentable means he was sad. In other words, when he cried out to Daniel, he wasn't really truly expecting a response. Now, think about logically, should he have expected a response? No. Daniel just spent all night with the lions. Logically, a response wasn't expected. It was a sorrowful request that he was making. It's like, Daniel, are you there? And the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou service continually, able to deliver thee from the lions. You know, think about it. He refers to Daniel as a servant of the living God.

That's Daniel's testimony again before the king. Daniel's testimony was there. He knew that Daniel's greatest allegiance was to God. You know, when you think about it, wouldn't that be what we ought to desire as Christians? To say that when people that know us and are around us, that our greatest allegiance is to the Lord. That our allegiance is to God. That God is the priority over everything else. It's obvious to them. It ought to be something that's obvious to them whom you serve. You know, all of us are going to serve something. You know, these people, I'm free. No, you're not. You're serving something. The Bible makes it very clear that you're either a slave to sin or you're a free servant of God. I mean, there's something going to have power that's going to direct you, that's going to prioritize you. You know, what do they know about your faith in Christ? Does it go above everything else? Does it take priority over hobbies? I know preachers dance in dangerous territory, stepping on toes, right? You know, things that we do, the things we choose, even the fun activities we do, we need to ask, are they taking a place priority over God?

God doesn't say we can't enjoy some things in life, but we got to be careful those things we enjoy don't supersede God. Because what have we done? We've taken what we like and prioritized it. We placed it as an idol above God. You know, putting things in the right priorities, you know, responsibilities, you know. Does your true and deepest loyalties go to Christ and that every other aspect of your life is subject unto that? You know what? Think about for a moment, what does Proverbs tells us? That if we trust the Lord, He's going to do what? He's going to direct our paths. You know what? If you serve God first, you know what else? It puts everything else in the right order. Because God knows that we have different priorities, that we are responsibilities. You know, we've talked about that a few, you know, weeks ago when we talk about family. You know, dads, you have a responsibility to your family.

You have a God-given responsibility to your family. But you know what? God says family should never usurp Him. God says if you're in the right relationship with me, your responsibility to your family is going to be in the right place. Your responsibility to your kids are going to be in the right place. Your responsibility to your job is going to be in the right place. The one thing we see about Daniel is he put the priorities in the right place. And he kept God first. And he testifies about it here. Notice, look back at our text here in verse 21. Daniel, as he testifies here before the king, and then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever. My God has sent his angel and shut the mouth of the lion's mouth that they may not hurt me, or excuse me, that they have not hurt me for as much as before him in his sea was found in me. And also before the O king, have I done no hurt?

You know, Daniel experienced a very similar deliverance years before unto the king Nebuchadnezzar. You know, when we see that dynamic, you know, Daniel chapter three talks about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and it says, when they told him this in verse eight, if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, that he will deliver us out of, out of the thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. You know, the reality is they said God's going to be the priority and whatever God does, God does. To trust God to take care of it, God is still going to deliver us today. You know, when situations come and people rise up against the truth of God's word, we need to trust that God has already got things under control. That we need to be faithful. It doesn't mean we're going to be comfortable. God's blessing doesn't mean comfort. God's blessing means that we are secure and protected in his hand. But we have a mindset today that God's blessing is equated with comfort.

[27:24] You know what? Daniel understood God's blessing isn't equated with comfort. God's blessing is equated with faithfulness and consistency. You know, you still are deliver.

You know, think about what David said in Psalm 18. Psalm 18 verse 2 says, The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised. So shall I be saved from mine enemies. You know, we need to trust the Lord. God didn't promise to always bring physical deliverance. You know, think about what, think about Hebrews chapter 11.

Hebrews 11 is a chapter of faith. Beginning of there, it talks about the things that they conquered, you know, that through faith they did this and through faith they did that. You know, but look toward Hebrews chapter 11 for a moment. Let's look down at verse 33, because in that same chapter, it mentions some other things. Verse 33, it says, Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of the fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant to fight, turned the flight of the armies of the aliens, and women received their dead raised to life again. Boy, that sounds like, whew, all right. That's a good thing. Now look at the rest of that. Others were what? Tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection, and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings. Yea, moreover, the bonds and imprisonments, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted and were slain with the sword, they wandered in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and in mountains and in dens and in caves of the earth. Have you stopped to think that God made just as much about their faith as He did about the things that we see physically, the victories that they saw physically? He said, the faith of those that were willing to say, I'm going to serve God no matter what. They may have been tortured or martyred for their faith, but they were no less loved by God than those who had been delivered. One may have experienced a physical deliverance and the other did not, but both groups experienced God as their refuge and their strength in the moment of need. You know what? Daniel trusted God in his moment of need.

There's a lot of trust when Daniel got lowered down into the lion's den. Let's go back to our story for a moment. Look back in verse 23 here in Daniel chapter 6. And when the king was exceedingly glad for him and commanded that they should take up Daniel up out of the den, so Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him because he believed in his God.

[30:33] Now verse 24 tells us how the king was upset for being tricked. Notice verse 24, the king commanded and they brought those men that which had accused Daniel and they cast them into the den of lions and the lions had the mastery of them and break all their bones in pieces, or wherever they came at the bottom of the den. You know, Daniel was delivered by God put judgment upon the others. You know what? The same is true today as a believer. We will be delivered and God will hold those to account who need to be held to account. To trust the Lord in those things, we should not be surprised when we encounter envy and oppression and persecution for our faith because, you know, you think about Jesus told his disciples, he said, if the world hate you, you know that it hated me

before it hated you. We live in a world that doesn't love the one who created it. We need to understand that perspective, but Jesus also gives us a promise. That promise is very clear. He says,

I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. No matter what, he's with us. You know what Daniel understood? That his God was with him no matter what. He said, I'm going to serve God because God is with me. God supports me. God's going to take care of me. God's going to provide. God's going to protect. God's going to deliver. I need to trust him. You know, if we're to move forward for God, if we are to dare to be like Daniel and stand strong in the face of opposition, persecution, or difficulty, we need to understand the importance of relying upon God by prayer, to live with resilience, to understand the importance of even maintaining our testimony, that excellent spirit under oppression. And we need to be people that call and trust and ask God for guidance. Our greatest victories for Christ are not won publicly. The greatest victory you'll win for Christ is in private with him because that's where your confidence in God is built and your trust is displayed to build you with the Lord. And so we see those things with Daniel and in Daniel's life of how he trusted God.

You know, we need to trust God and to be resilient in the day in which we live and the challenges which we face to stand true to God's word. So, you know, amen. Trust me. Good. We've got just a few minutes here. Maybe we have some thoughts or questions there from the lesson here on Daniel. And so we'll take a few moments here. Anything stand out to you? Maybe kind of made you think a little different or maybe just encourage you as we went through that? Your testimony is definitely important.

You know, we need to have a good testimony with those around us. It's key. Anything else? Devil seems to love those dynamics. Take a stand. Yes.

Yeah. Our choices impact more than ourselves. Darrell?

[34:24] You know, testimony is a big thing with Daniel of keeping a testimony and keeping it right no matter what's going on.

Because even though he was wronged, he didn't change his testimony. Stayed true. Well, if you read the rest of the chapter, you'll find that God had a plan.

Because you know what Darius did? He published a decree throughout the whole land talking about Daniel's God. Think about that. God put Daniel in that circumstance that a decree might go forth declaring who he is.

You know? Faithfulness represents the Lord right and God can use that in our life.