

Overcoming Envy and Political Hardship, part 2

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[0:00] It continued on in our Sunday school series here, talking about living a resilient life. You know, the fact is, as a believer, we need to be resilient in the circumstances and the situations of life.

And so we're going to, I began a few weeks ago before April and I took off on vacation. And so we enjoyed some time out in Colorado for a few days and stayed at higher elevation, which was enjoyable.

We stayed above 9,000 for a week. So it was nice to be able to go out and be around there. But then this last week, I know we're gone on Wednesday. We're down in Missouri at a preacher's meeting.

And if you need to know, preachers need preach to, too. And so we get together and encourage one another. But that's where we were earlier last week there.

And I appreciate all those who filled in why we were gone and all the things that took place. And it's good to see God's work continue and to continue to move forward.

[1:03] That's always an encouragement to the pastor. But I'd be encouraged to us to continue working in what God has for us. And because God's work goes on no matter what.

And so, but as we begin looking here this morning, once again, we understand the, as we begin looking at Daniel, we'll just cover a few brief things here and get into it.

We should have, if you don't have, we've got outlines coming here. If you don't bring back, it's number nine that we have. If you don't have that, we've got some more coming off the printer. I'll be in here in just a moment for the handouts for that.

I'm running a little behind this week and trying to play catch up with everything. And I forgot, got up here this morning right before class and remembered I didn't print a new handout. So we got those spooled and ready to go.

But let's take a look over here in Daniel chapter 6 here this morning. And we're going to see here in Daniel chapter 6, verse 1, the word of God says this, It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 princes, which should be over the whole kingdom.

[2:12] And over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was first, that the princes might give 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. And so we'll leave off there and pick up here. Let's go ahead and have a word of prayer.

Heavenly fathers, we just come before you again this morning. Lord, we're thankful for your word. Lord, we're thankful for examples like Daniel to be resilient in life, to trust you even in circumstances that we say, Lord, there's no way this is going to turn out in any way good.

But Lord, we know that you can take those things and turn them to good. Lord, that we can trust you, that you have a plan and a purpose. Lord, as we see in the life of Daniel, Lord, even Daniel's testimony and how even having a godly testimony doesn't mean that people are going to like you, that people are going to appreciate what you do.

And Lord, that we still need to stand firm upon that. And Lord, we just give you the praise and glory today in Jesus' name. Amen. You know, if you remember, as we talked a few weeks ago about Daniel, as he was taken into captivity and he served under Nebuchadnezzar.

[3:37] And then after Nebuchadnezzar was replaced by Darius, we find that as we read here in Daniel 6, that he was elevated again, you know, which

is actually an unheard of thing in ancient times.

You know, you don't find very often that a new king comes in and he takes the senior advisors from the previous king and puts them in places of prominence.

You know, that's an unheard of thing. That took an act of God by itself that Daniel moved from a place of prominence under Nebuchadnezzar to a place of prominence under Darius.

Because it wasn't a peaceful secession. It was a military overthrow of the government. You know, so what I want you to see here is what Daniel's testimony was a very powerful testimony.

It was a testimony that even impacted a new king coming in. To say, hey, Daniel, I've heard about him. I've seen him.

[4:43] I understand what's going on. But Daniel, we know, the Bible tells us here, look here in verse 3. What set Daniel apart?

Notice it's because an excellent spirit was in him. You know, that's a powerful phrase, isn't it? The thing about it, he had an excellent spirit within him.

In other words, when Darius, okay, if you need an outline, go ahead and slip your hand up and Ethan will get you one here. And I know it's been a few weeks since we started this, so it's easy to get them to fall out of the Bible or someplace else or all those fun things.

But, you know, we see here this excellent spirit. He saw something different in Daniel. There was something distinct in Daniel.

And it tells us here that he was preferred above the presidents and princes. In other words, we see here something happen in this dynamic as we begin looking here to understand what's taking place.

[5:48] Here's these leaders, and Daniel is first. And then suddenly Darius says, I want to move him out of just first position to place him over the whole kingdom. And he says, I've got a guy that's, I think we've got a few more over here.

Thank you, Ethan. Anybody else? All right. I want you to see here is Daniel served the Lord with an excellent spirit because he made a decision early on in his life of what he was going to do.

You know, in Daniel chapter 1, you find that Daniel made a decision because the Bible tells us that in verse 8 of Daniel chapter 1, it says, but Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.

And he's talking there specifically about some things that were going on. But I think that defilement and the defile himself was a commitment he kept beyond this. How do we know that?

Because of his spirit that he had. It was a godly spirit, something that made a difference in his life.

[6:54] And we find here that under King Darius, Daniel was elevated even higher. He was preferred above all the others. You know, we go see Daniel's life was one.

He went from his teenage years. At this point, he's coming up on his 80s. Daniel lived a full life. You know what? Daniel was a man who began with character and ended with character.

That ought to be our goal. To say that people see the character of my life throughout. The consistency of your life. You know, it ought to be something we strive for because he had this excellent spirit, a testimony of resilience and faith.

Daniel had learned to trust God through difficult circumstances. And God used him and revealed. We talked last time about some of the things that God used Daniel. Daniel was revealed.

God revealed to him the thing about kingdoms to come and the timetable of the end. I mean, Daniel was a prophet who gave all sorts of, God gave him all sorts of information that was important, not only in their day, but in our day.

[8:07] God used Daniel in a mighty way. But I want you to see here that something happens because just because you serve God, because you do things right.

You know, sometimes this is a misconception. If I do everything right, everything should go well. Isn't that how we think sometimes? I did everything right. Why is it not going well?

Why is it not going the way that's good for me? That I think is good. I want you to understand that when you love God, you're going to serve God, there's going to be challenges.

There's going to be things that test your faith. Just as we looked at earlier at the church at Thessalonica, there were things that tested their faith early to say, what do I believe and why do I believe it?

And why is it important that I believe it? I want you to see here, we can learn some things from Daniel about a resilient faith. And even when we have oppression from the outside, people that don't like you, you have governments that don't like you, you have all these dynamics, but yet we can still serve God.

[9:16] We can do what God would want. And so let's take a look here this morning. As we see here, the first thing, the mandate against Daniel. Notice here in verse 4 of Daniel chapter 6, it says, then the presidents and the princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom.

You know, notice here, what's the first thing they did? They went to find a problem with Daniel concerning his leadership, concerning his position. Did he favor somebody he shouldn't? Did he kind of give, overlook something? Or, you know, did he fall or falter any place in his leadership? I mean, they did a full scrutiny of everything that Daniel did.

You might say they had all sorts of committee hearings and all sorts of testimony trying to find somebody to find something against him. But notice what they said here. But they could find none occasion nor fault.

For as much as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. You know, when the word of God says that there was no error or fault found, that's a pretty high testimony that Daniel put in.

[10:31] Because sometimes life is hard to make sure that comes out that way. There's some difficult decisions, but we see the mandate here that's going to take place. Notice this in 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.

Now we're going to see this play out because we're going to face trials and attacks, and oftentimes it has to do with an attack of what you believe. What do you say that God, know that God has said, and where am I willing to stand on it?

Where am I willing to do that? And we find here that this ungodly envy is the thing we see. They were envious of Daniel. Why? Because Daniel was elevated above him.

You know, we never see that today, do we? People get upset because somebody else gets promoted. You know, somebody else gets lifted above somebody else. You know, the wrong person gets in.

But we find here that Daniel had a testimony that made a difference. They found nothing against him. This ungodly envy led them to try to find anything they could against Daniel.

[11:46] And I want you to understand there are times when ungodly people plot against believers, plot against Christians, not because we've done anything wrong, but because we're trying to please God.

Because sometimes your testimony convicts. You know, I imagine these guys were convicted by Daniel because they were probably taking bribes. They were probably doing things under the table they shouldn't.

And they were like, we've got to get rid of this Daniel because he's making us look bad. You know, if you have an upright testimony, there's going to be people that are going to want to get rid of you. They're going to try to downplay. And you need to be prepared for it. You know, we want to be consistent with what we say we believe. And when you do that, the world's going to hate and persecute you.

Just as they did to Daniel, just as they did with the prophets. You know, we need to understand it's going to take place because even Peter, look over to 1 Peter chapter 3. 1 Peter chapter 3, we find here in the Word of God that Peter encourages us and other believers down through the ages.

[12:55] He says, but if you suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye. And be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you the reason, the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Having a good conscience that whereas they speak evil of you as evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Now, let me sum that up for you. People are going to throw accusations against you if you stand for the Lord. What ought to happen is, is when people hear the accusation, they look at the accusation and say, I know them and this is what they're accusing.

There's something that doesn't line up. Because people are going to make accusations. The thing is, those accusations ought to have no substance.

They ought not to stick. They ought not to have something behind them. If there's something behind them, that's a different problem. No, because I want you to understand, there's times that people, Christians, do things they ought not to do, and they ought to be held to account because of what they did.

[14:05] That's not suffering for righteousness' sake. That's suffering because of your sin. That's different. But we ought to understand the importance of this and the importance of Daniel.

Because notice in Proverbs chapter 14, verse 30, it says, A sound heart is the life of the flesh, but envy, the rottenness of the bones. These individuals were rotten clear through.

They were willing to do anything it took to get what they wanted. Envy leads us to places that's a problem. You know, envy is desiring to have what somebody else has.

One of our problems in culture today is envy. Let me present something to you. Victim culture is envy culture. To say I'm always a victim is saying I'm envious because I didn't get what somebody else got.

Those two tie together. They might dress it up. They might put lipstick on the pig, but you know what? You can dress a pig up, it's still a pig. I want you to understand envy. And these men with this ungodly envy, but Daniel had a faithful testimony.

[15:18] You know, that ought to be what we strive for, to have a faithful testimony. To say when others look at that, there's something there. You notice in verse 4, it says, But they could find none occasion or fault for as much as he was faithful.

Neither was there any error or fault in him. He walked in integrity. You know, what an amazing testimony. Because I want you to understand, Daniel wasn't walking amongst a bunch of other believers.

Daniel was serving in an ungodly culture that worshipped idols. That had very, they had their own standard of morality.

Things that went against what God would have. I wouldn't say that the culture didn't have a moral standard. Every culture has a moral standard. The question is, is that moral standard the standard that measures up with God's standard?

Because we all live with a standard. Standard's not the problem. The question is, what is the standard? And so as we look here, his faithful testimony, he had pagan people around him.

[16:27] He had hateful leaders that couldn't find anything. And they gave everything they could to try to overthrow him. You know, it's funny how the Bible tells us there's nothing new under the sun.

I mean, if you change the names and the dates, you could probably find, put American political system into this. You know, because in our highly politicized society, it seems every other week, somebody's trying to investigate somebody else, trying to get dirt to maneuver or to hold leverage on somebody.

I mean, that's been definitely clear the last 10 years. I mean, you see this whole big political plays of dynamics of trying to get things. And we need to be careful as a believer not to get caught up in the pettiness of people just trying to get even or envy.

We keep our focus on the right things and understand the dynamic, you know, and it becomes exhausting. You know, I imagine this was an exhaustive thing that they tried to look into Daniel. You know, they tried to find everything they could. They couldn't find anything. Daniel's integrity was intact. And the people who worked in regular and close proximity with Daniel hated him, but could not find a problem with him.

[17:39] When I read that, I'm thinking, man, we need to have Daniel leadership book. I mean, I would like a copy of Daniel's leadership book. How do you manage that? I think it's because Daniel spent time with God.

His testimony of what he said matched what he did. You know, think about Proverbs 22 and verse 1. The Bible tells us this, A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches and loving favor rather than silver and gold.

You know, that gives us a clue. When we get our eyes on what we can possess, oftentimes your integrity goes downhill pretty fast. Daniel's testimony is that he gave the king confidence in him because of what he did.

He saw no flaw in Daniel. King Darius trusted Daniel with the rule of the kingdom. Want to know why? Because Daniel was faithful in the little things. Daniel was faithful in the details.

Think about what Jesus says in Luke chapter 10. He says, He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. And he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

[18:45] You know, I want you to understand, Daniel wasn't a perfect man, but he was a man that had integrity. But notice the jealous trap that they set. They wanted to find a trap for him according to his God.

They say the only thing that constrains Daniel is his God. So they said we have to find something in Daniel's code from God that's going to cause him to be in conflict with something we can create.

That we can create a conflict with it. And we're going to see what takes place here in that. Because remember that they go and they begin to build up the king.

You know, they went flattery. You know, take a look here in verse 7 in our text here. It says this in verse 6. It says, And then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king and said unto him, King Darius, live forever.

All the presidents of the kingdoms and governor and princes and the counselors and the captains have consulted together to establish a royal statute to make a firm decree that whosoever shall ask petition of any god or man for 30 days save thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

[20:03] Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing that it may not be changed according to the law, the Medes, and the Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore, King Darius signed the writing and the decree.

What did they do? They set a trap to say, Hey, Darius, you're such a great king that we ought to limit anybody being able to ask of anybody else but you. Now, as I was reading this, the one thing that I got to think about, you know, like anybody trying to do something wicked, they try to sit there out.

What they did, they said, okay, 30 days ought to be enough. You know, we don't want to have this problem come back on us, but you know, we can, if we set it 30 days, we know Daniel's going to have a problem before then.

So we can get him and then this thing will go away and we can go back to doing what we want to do. You know? And like I said, when you read through this, you see politics today, don't you? I mean, nothing new's happening.

It's just the names and the location may be different, but the heart of people are the same. And they set this 30 day that, you know, and now King, you know, anybody that does pray to somebody else, they need to be cast into the den of lions.

[21:13] Now, when we read the end of this chapter, you'll find the den of lions, they were pretty sure Daniel was not supposed to come out of. I mean, that's the reason they chose this. They're like, they keep the lions down there and they're hungry.

So when they drop them in, we know what's going to happen. And you'll see that when the results come later, because as soon as they put the people down in that had stood against Daniel, they were consumed and broken apart almost immediately.

So we see this was their plan and we see that they flattered the king, you know? Think about this. Have you ever asked, why didn't Darius go ask Daniel? Did he agree to this?

He was the one that he trusted greatly. But they come and say, you know, well, I'm pretty sure it was kind of like, well, Daniel's on board. Instead of checking it out, you know what? Flattery sometimes gets us to not do our diligence that we ought to do.

And I want you to see here, it caused Darius a lot of heartache because he didn't do diligence. Even in the king, it was a problem. They were flattering, trying to manipulate. And they didn't want Daniel to be consulted.

[22:21] So they tried to push it through in a rapid pace. Just sign this king, it'll all be good. Darius all puffed up. What's Darius do? He signs it. Now you have a little glimpse into ancient culture here because the Medes and the Persians, and you see this dynamic because you see this also in the book of Esther, they remember they couldn't revoke what was written in law, but they could add to it.

Same problem that Daniel faced. You see this same, the Medes and the Persians, you want their moral code? If it's in the law, we can't change it. That was their moral code.

It was like, everything can be adjusted except for this. But they used and manipulated that. The Medes and the Persians saw that made law could not simply be undone.

So they knew that once the king signed the decree for the next 30 days, they could watch Daniel to see what he was going to do.

They knew that the law was so ridiculous that it would only be enforced against his target because let me ask you a question. Do you think Daniel was the only one? Think about it. This is a kingdom-wide decree.

[23:32] Do you think Daniel was the only one that made a petition to God other than the king? But no, they had Daniel targeted. They were watching. They knew that they were going to engulf him in this.

And Daniel faced this mandate. It was not impossible to think that the mandate could come. We see that today in our culture. There's mandates against praying.

I don't know if you've been following the news. In England, you had an individual for silently praying on the sidewalk be arrested. Those things are coming to America. This mindset is slipping in.

The question is, what are we going to do if it does? You know what Daniel said? You can make the decree, but I have a higher decree. I have a law that supersedes your law. I have a responsibility that's higher than my responsibility to you.

This is one of those things I want you to talk about sometimes. The dynamic is sometimes as a believer, the hardest decision to make is what is the higher decree of right?

[24:33] Because there's a lot of things that were right. Now, let me throw you a question. If we're supposed to obey kings that God has over us, was Daniel having a sense of responsibility to obey the decree?

On the surface, yes, but the decree directly violated a principle of God. So therefore, Daniel had a choice. Do I submit to this or do I submit to this?

God tells me I ought to submit to the king, but Daniel says I ought to submit to God first. Sometimes the struggle is not what's right. It's what God says is the priority or the most right.

Because the most right wasn't to obey the king. The most right was to obey God. We face those situations in our life. That's the reason you need to know the word of God to be able to discern what is the most important, what's the higher responsibility.

You'll find that that plays out throughout scripture. We can point out to a lot of different examples where you say, well, they did what was wrong. Well, no, there was a higher responsibility in play that they did that which was right.

[25:46] One of those things is life. The preservation of life holds a high priority to God. If you want, we can talk about some of that later. I better move on. I'm running out of time already. Okay. But think about the ministry of Daniel.

What did Daniel do when he was faced with a mandate that directly attacked his worship of God? You know, most of us here are familiar with this story. I mean, you've probably, if you've been in church any length of time, you're familiar with what took place.

You've probably heard the story. If you grew up in Sunday school, you've heard this story many times. So simply let's, what did Daniel do when he heard? This is an interaction here. Good morning.

Wake up. All right. Good. All right. We didn't put everybody to sleep. He prayed. Now, I want you to understand that Daniel didn't just pray because it was like, oh no, I'd better go pray.

Daniel just went and did what he always did. That's the reason they chose this particular thing because they knew what Daniel did.

[26:50] Three times a day, the Bible says Daniel prayed towards Jerusalem. He prayed towards Jerusalem and he prayed unto God and asked God's will on his life, his direction, his clarity.

I want you to notice something here. He didn't go try to rally a bunch of people to counteract it. Daniel knew who it was directed against. He didn't go into hiding. He didn't blast the king and the government.

You know, he didn't type in all caps on his Facebook account, you know, or his Instagram. He prayed. Notice what it tells us here in verse 10. Now, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem.

He kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime. I want you to see here. Daniel knew what the ramifications were.

And he said, it's not going to change my relationship between me and God. He knew that God was able to deal with the situation. You know, today we enjoy a lot of freedoms religiously in our nation.

[28:04] What a blessing that we have. And these sacrifices and the things we enjoy are not something we ought to take lightly. Daniel didn't take his responsibility and his ability and his desire to spend time with God to be altered by what somebody else was doing.

He said, I want to do that. I want it's a priority because we need to understand the freedom that we have is because somebody else paid a price. You know what Daniel said?

Lord, if it's the price I'm going to pay, I'm going to pay the price. He was willing to stand up and to do what he ought to do. You know, we need to remember that as Christians, our highest allegiance is to God.

And our greatest commission is the responsibility to God, the great commission. You know, to preach the gospel. I think there's coming a day soon when the gospel is going to be hate speech. Other places in the world, it's already happening.

You know, we have a big case right before the Supreme Court that's going to be settled out here. From the state of Colorado, talking about hate speech, where it's going to be hate speech for a counselor to tell somebody that they were born a boy or a girl.

[29:15] And how they feel about it doesn't matter. Because the state of Colorado is suing a counselor that says, no, you have to affirm them. You can't tell them what they believe is wrong. If you do, you're going to go to jail.

That case was heard about seven, eight days ago in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. Didn't make a whole lot of press. But it's a very important case.

Because it deals even directly with the gospel. If you can't tell somebody the truth about what they were born, how are you going to tell them the truth about who God is? How are they going to be able to tell somebody the reality that you're a sinner that needs a Savior?

These things are important. And we need to make a decision now. How are we going to respond to them? Because here we find Daniel gives us a good example. Why we should thank God for our liberties to preach the gospel and to do those things.

It's important to know that the greatest victories are not won in court, but they're won in prayer. I want you to understand that Daniel here, take a look at Daniel because he had a planned prayer.

[30:20] You know, Daniel knew the law and the punishment, but he, like the apostles would do later, consciously chose to obey God. You know, think about Acts chapter 5, where Peter and John, it says, And Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to, what?

Obey God rather than man. But I want you to see here, Daniel's prayer life was one that other people knew about. It was public. Why did they pick on it?

Because they knew about it. You know? You know, Daniel could have rationalized this and said, well, I'll just close my windows this time so they can't see me.

But I want you to see here in verse 10, he always had his windows open toward Jerusalem. He says, I'm not going to change what I do to appease you. I'm going to trust God. I'm going to do the same thing that I've always done.

It was public. You know, we see these things taking place throughout our nation. We need to be careful to understand that just because things aren't going the way we think, that doesn't mean God

is limited in our testimony or in what God can do.

[31:27] Because, you know, one of Satan's lies that he tries to tell is that if you take a public stand, it's actually going to limit your opportunities to point others to him. You know? Tries to lead us to believe that it's a, you know, distasteful.

You know, it's one of those things. Think about, don't talk about religion. That's one of the things people try to promote. Well, don't talk about religion. You know, that's not unsavory for common society.

Don't talk about politics and religion. You know what? That interchanges in our life that people are going to talk about it. But in polite society, you know, they try to make, say, well, don't mention that. The devil loves to try to make us timid and not stand up. You know, Paul tells this in Romans 1, verse 16 says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

You know? Daniel wasn't afraid or timid about who his God is. But he also had intercessory prayer. You know?

[32:35] He prayed toward Jerusalem. Why did he do this? He was praying with repentance and faith that God would hear and forgive his people. This was the prayer that Israel was instructed to pray if they were taken into captivity for their sins, which is, in fact, what had happened.

You know, think about, go over to 2 Chronicles 6 for a moment. 2 Chronicles 6. Daniel. I think Daniel looked back and read the Old Testament prophets that he had to that point, and he says, you know what?

God told us this was going to happen. That's the reason I think Daniel was disheartened in his life, because he's like, you know, I'm just dealing with things and decisions that others have made. Daniel being in Babylon wasn't directly because of Daniel, it was because of decisions that others had made before him. God had told them clearly, if you do this, this is what's going to happen. You know what? Daniel realized that, hey, God said, if they did this, this is what's going to happen. I'm being impacted by this. But he said he also understood that Jeremiah and others told him, hey, God's going to bring you back into the land.

[33:44] You know what he was looking for? He had the calendar out, and he goes, time's coming. I might not be able to go because I'm an old man, but you know what? I'm going to see God's prayer answer.

What God said, God's promise is going to be answered. Daniel said, it doesn't deal with my situation, but notice here, 2 Chronicles 6, verse 38, it says, that they return to thee with all their heart, with all their soul, in the land of their captivity, whether they have carried them captive, and prayed toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name.

Then hear thou from heaven, and even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause, and forgive them.