

# To Live By Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn to that chapter again and think about it together. Daniel chapter 6.

And I'm also going to refer to the very beginning of Daniel, Daniel chapter 1, because you'll find some of the background to this in the first chapter.

But there's no time to read it. I'm just going to refer to some of the verses in it. This is the kind of book where you really have to try and imagine what it must have been like.

It's absolutely impossible to understand this book unless you really try very hard to imagine what it would be like for a 14, something like about a 14-year-old or mid-teens.

And he's living a normal Jewish life in Judah. And all of a sudden, an army surrounds their city and starts killing some people and taking others captive.

[ 1 : 13 ] They're choosing and selecting the very best, the youngest, the fittest, the most intelligent for themselves. They're not going to kill them, but they're going to kill many of the older people and people who are of no use to.

That's the way the Babylonians were. And that is what God had threatened to them. And God had threatened that his people were going to be given in to the hands of the Babylonians.

And that meant that people who were growing up at that time had to suffer. They had to suffer the sadness of watching many of the members of their own family dying while they themselves were taken prisoners.

And they had to be led all the way, the hundreds of miles from where they lived. And they had never seen any other culture or anyone else. They were all of a sudden thrust into a different language. People like Daniel would not have been able to understand the language that he all of a sudden had to encounter in Babylon. It was a completely different culture.

[ 2 : 17 ] And you know as well as I do that even today, that cultures are different. Behavior is different. People are different all over the world. And there was a Jewish culture which Daniel would have been used to.

And there was a Babylonian culture which was totally different. It was radically different from the way their lifestyle, what they enjoyed, what they thought was right and wrong, and all of these things.

The clothing that they wore, the food that they eat, all of that was so totally different from everything that Daniel was accustomed to. The language. He wasn't able to understand a word anyone said.

And what was more, because he was spotted as being one of the fittest, most intelligent amongst the Jews, he was thrust into a position where he had to all of a sudden go to university and learn, and not because he wanted to, but because he absolutely had to.

He was forced to. That's very clear in Daniel chapter 1. I can't think of a worse, most more traumatic experience to happen to any 14 or 15 year old boy.

[ 3 : 25 ] I can't think of anything else more terrible than to happen to him. Imagine the loneliness. Imagine the fear, not knowing what was going to happen to him. Imagine the homesickness that he must have felt.

It was absolutely awful. And you would think a person like that would be destroyed. And yet, the book of Daniel is one of the finest examples of how a person can survive even the most traumatic experience.

But there's one area which I didn't mention yet, and that's what, of course, the book is all about. And that is Daniel's religion, or I should put it more accurately, his faith in the living and the true God.

For one thing, to Daniel, there was only one God. And that was the God he had come to learn about in the books of the Old Testament. And he knew that there could not be anyone except God, any other God except the living and the true God.

But now, he was thrust into a culture where, not only there were different gods, but there were many gods worshipped by different people groups.

[ 4 : 35 ] The Babylonians brought everyone together, not just from Judah, but from different parts of the empire, to live together. This was truly what we would call a multi-faith society, where each section of Babylon, they were of different ethnic groups, and they worshipped in their own way their own God.

How would you expect a person, a 14-year-old boy, to survive as a Christian? And that's what he was. He was a person who lived by faith, because not only was his God different to every other God that was worshipped, but the way that he worshipped was totally different to the way that they would worship.

They would worship from the outside, by worshipping a statue, or an idol, or an image. Daniel knew within his heart, you can't make an image of God, because God is invisible.

And what's more, Daniel worshipped first and foremost in and through his heart. His worship was, first of all, a heart relationship with the living and the true God.

Now, no matter how long ago this was, I hope we're beginning to see already how incredibly relevant this book is to our world, the kind of world that we live in.

[ 6 : 00 ] And let me tell you this, this is what makes it so encouraging, and so useful, and so vital, because if someone like Daniel can survive, no, not survive, but thrive as a Christian in a multi-faith world, where not only is, he's not a free man, he's a slave, and he's having to do things that he wouldn't choose to do, he wouldn't be doing back home, serving a king that he doesn't know anything about.

Not only did he do that, he thrived in doing it, so that by the time chapter 6 comes, not only is he not a slave anymore, but he's the prime minister of Babylon.

Isn't that absolutely incredible? And it shows us that if someone like Daniel can thrive as, and this is the most incredible thing of all, not that he rose to power, but that he did so without compromising a single thing of his faith.

That's where Daniel really shines. It's perhaps not quite so surprising that somebody moves, I mean, you hear about it all the time, you read about people's history, how rags to riches, Dick Whittington, and all that kind of thing.

You read about these kind of people all the time. So it's perhaps not surprising that someone rises from being a slave to being a king or being a prime minister, but what is surprising is that he did so without compromising a single thing.

[ 7 : 35 ] He remained true in every possible respect to his God. And remaining true meant, this is what it meant, it meant that he drew the attention of the people around him to the living and true God, so that God was made, the invisible God, was made visible, if you see what I mean, in the life of Daniel.

And so that everyone saw that this man was totally different from everyone else. Not only did he worship in his heart, and through prayer, but also that his life was so totally different from everyone else, there had to be something radically different about Daniel.

The same is true today. If you live for God today, your life will be different. And it will be noticeably different. You might not think so, but I can assure you, it will be noticeably different to other people. And they will know there's something special about that man, or that woman, or about that boy, or about that girl. That's a promise. Absolutely. If you remain true to God, that's the hard part, of course, is remaining true to the Lord.

But that's the great thing about, not only, and I was going to say something else, but there's no time. Let's look at some of the things that we see in this chapter. What does it mean to live for God?

[ 9 : 10 ] What does it mean to live for God? Well, it means, first of all, to live by faith. In the New Testament, we're told by implication in Hebrews chapter 11, that Daniel lived by faith.

And faith shines all the way through this chapter. What do we mean by that? It means that Daniel's worship was not just an outward. He wasn't just a church goer.

For him, faith was not just Sunday faith, something he switched on on a Sunday the moment he walked into church, and switched off again as soon as he went out the door.

For him, his faith invaded every section of his life. And it must have been that he came to that faith when he was a young man.

There are no age limits when it comes to people living for God. Young people live for God, and old people live for God.

[10:13] And if you're young today, you're not too young to live for God. But if you're old today, you're not too old to begin living for God, to put God first, to seek first the kingdom of God.

And if ever there was an example of someone who sought first, did what Jesus said, and sought first the kingdom of God in the most incredibly difficult environment.

You see, it's one thing to live for God when everyone else is living for God. When your friends all agree with you, and they all do the same things as you, and they all go to the same meetings as you, and come to the same church as you, and when you're encouraged by your friends, it's another thing altogether to live for God when you're on your own.

And when you run the risk of opposition, and people turning against you, and people doing things to trip you up like they did in Daniel chapter 6, the one that we've written, that's another thing altogether.

But the real test of faith comes when the Lord pulls away all the support mechanisms, and leaves us sometimes on our own.

[11:27] He has to do that in order to test our faith. And here's Daniel, and his faith is being tested, because real faith is always, always tested.

That's why so often, I tell people who come to the Lord's table for the first time, just watch what happens now. And I've seen it, I've got so, I've seen it so many times in so many different people.

And very often, I'm not saying it always happens, very often it's when you make your faith public for the first time, that the devil kind of says, all right, we'll see how long this one lasts.

And it's true. But it's also true from the point of view of faith being tempted, because you know what God does?

He takes the very things that the devil uses to destroy you, and he will take them and use them to strengthen you. And so, here was, in this chapter, here was a faith being tested.

[12:33] And you can almost see the devil himself pushing these men who were so opposed to that, and they hated him so much, you can almost see him whispering in their ear, guiding them and winding them up in their jealousy and in their hatred against Daniel, and organizing things in the background in order to destroy Daniel.

And yet, at the end of the chapter, it's God who has the last word, because God always has the last word. And Daniel's faith is strengthened.

So don't be afraid of that test of faith. Don't be surprised when you become miserable as a Christian because you're saying, I struggle so much, I don't understand why I'm finding it so hard to be a Christian.

God never promised us a life full of happiness. You know, if I was to stand here today and I was to say, if you become a Christian, you will have, life will have no problems from now on.

You will have such an easy life, you'll be able to control everything, you'll be able to be on top of everything, you'll be able to just ride through the rest of your life as if, I would be a liar.

[13:45] And I hope you would show me the door. But I have to say today that Daniel is an outstanding example of someone who's prepared to suffer and who would have suffered because his God, the living and the true God, was so precious to him and so close to him and meant so much to him.

That's what faith is, isn't it? Why is it that faith is such a big thing? Why is it that it's the number one thing in my life and the number one thing in your life today, just as it was the number one thing in Daniel's life?

Because he had come to discover how much God meant to him and he had discovered what it was to have a personal relationship with God.

And whilst he didn't know what we know about the New Testament, what was actually happening in Daniel's life was he was having a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

He had never heard the name Jesus Christ before, but he knew that one day God was going to send his son into the world, the Messiah into the world, and that through him that we would be reconciled to God.

[15:02] That's what makes it faith. It's not just any faith, it's faith specifically in Jesus Christ as our Savior. That's what faith is all about.

Faith is when we come to see that we, that God, that we need God more than anything else in the world, that our number one desperate need is to be right with God.

And then to come to him. Not to wait until we earn our way into his kingdom, because you'll never do that, but to come to him and to listen to his word and to listen to his son, Jesus, who invites every one of us today to come to him and to put our faith and our trust and our awe in him.

Alone. Alone for our salvation. That's what faith is all about. But faith always leads to a relationship with God. How does that relationship work?

Well, it works, first of all, in prayer. You notice how in this chapter, prayer is such a major feature of Daniel's life. Whatever they were going to take away, they could take away his freedom.

[16:25] They could take away his position of power. They could take away so much. They could take away his home. They could really do what they like because Darius was a very powerful man and so were the people who served him.

And Darius could have cut the fruit from under him and taken away everything. But the one thing that they could not take away was his relationship with the Lord. and the one thing that Daniel was not prepared to have them take away was his prayer life.

Whatever else, his prayer life was going to remain intact even if it meant his death. Why was that? Because prayer for Daniel was not just saying his prayers.

I know how we teach the children to say their prayers and we're quite right to do so. But there's a difference. When it comes to you and I, there's a difference between saying your prayer and really praying to the Lord.

When we pray to the Lord we come and we speak to the Lord with an open heart. We're honest with the Lord and we, we come because we know we have access to him.

[17:29] You know, sometimes I, I wonder if we really know the privilege and the joy that we have in prayer. And I talk to myself as well. I sometimes wonder if I would only, if I'd only rediscover every single day what real prayer is, then I would be much more of a praying person.

And sometimes I think we need to stop every time, every time we start to pray we need to stop for a moment and just think, you know, I am right now going to be speaking to the Lord of glory, to the living and the true God.

And God is going to right now receive me and listen to me as if I was the only person in the world.

That's what prayer is. It's the greatest privilege that you will ever have in this world.

It's the greatest relationship that you can ever possibly have in this world. And it's a relationship which is expressed in prayer. How important is prayer to you?

To Daniel, it was not negotiable. not negotiable. And he was prepared to give up his life for it. That's how precious it was to him.

[18:50] But also, living for God for Daniel meant obedience to God. It meant taking God's word and living by it by applying it in every possible area in his life.

And that was seen way at the very beginning in chapter chapter one where the king tried to make Daniel eat a certain kind of food that Daniel knew to be wrong for him to eat.

Now, you and I might find that a little bit strange because to us in the New Testament in this part of the world there's nothing. We can eat anything we want. There are no rules for what we eat and what we don't eat.

But in the Old Testament God had said for whatever reason there's no time to go into them but for whatever reason some foods were clean some foods weren't clean. And when Daniel was taken to Babylon the king tried to force him or rather the servant of the king tried to force him to eat a certain type of food which Daniel he knew if he was going to eat that food he knew that he would be sinning against God and he would be acting in disobedience.

Now, he could have said to himself well, nobody's going to know. But he knew that that wasn't correct. He knew that somebody would know. God would know and that was the most important thing of all.

[20:10] You know, sometimes when we're away from the crowd and when we're away from those who know what's going on it's easy for us to act in secret. Don't ever ever act in secret because you're never in secret as a Christian.

You're never in secret and you can never afford to act as if God wasn't there. Now, you know, I'm saying this today because I'm very conscious that this time of year some of our young people go away from home.

And whilst what I'm saying today should be applicable to all of us, I just want to say one or two things to those who are leaving home for the first time because I remember that in my own life. I remember the difference it made to me and to the way I thought all of a sudden your parents are not there anymore. And all of a sudden you get tempted by things that you were never tempted to do in the past. You've got a new freedom.

You're living by yourself. You're independent. And when you leave home there is a definite threshold. Your past is past and now it's a new life altogether.

[ 21 : 17 ] It's great. It's very important to do that, to reach that stage in your life. It's really important. I remember how it made me feel being able to stand on my feet for the first time.

And here's Daniel and he's in exactly the same position. And all of a sudden he's having to make decisions he's never had to make in his life. But thankfully, wonderfully, marvelously, the one question he's asking every single time is, what does God want me to do?

And that's what living for God is all about. It's asking this question, what does God want me to do? What this man is asking me to do in chapter one, eat this kind of food, what does God say about it? Daniel could have said, well, it really doesn't matter. But it did matter because it matters how you live. And if you put God in the first place in your heart, then everything else will follow suit.

He was prepared to be obedient, obedient to God. And I'm asking, how obedient are we going to be? And how obedient are we? Whether we're in Stornoway or whether we're in Glasgow or Aberdeen or Edinburgh or wherever else we're going, how obedient are we to God?

[ 22 : 36 ] And how are we prepared to put God in the first place? In the first place? And I'm asking you today, afresh, what place does the Lord have in your heart?

And can you afford to go into a new chapter in your life without having put the Lord in the first place? Can you afford to do that?

I would say no, you can't. The safest place to be, the best place of all, is to be in a relationship in that faith relationship with Jesus Christ as your savior.

But not only was he obedient to God, he was consistent in everything. You see, and you notice today, I'm not really talking about the lions, because the lions is only part of the story.

Daniel was consistent in everything that he was. And he was also so involved. You see, there's a question that always arises amongst Christians, particularly young Christians, and the question is this, how involved can I be in the world as a Christian?

[ 23 : 57 ] And that's a very, very important question, and it can't be answered in five minutes. It's a really important question. But do you know what? I've got bad news for you.

I can't, there are no easy answers to that one. There are no black and white answers. Well, there are some things which are black and white. What God has put in his word, and when God has told you not to do something, then if you're going to live for God, you don't do it.

Simple as that. And what God has put in his word, telling you what to do as a Christian, if you don't do it, you're breaking his word. It's as simple as that. And yet so much of life, there are not easy answers.

There are no black and white answers. You have to live by faith. You have to try and understand the Bible in such a way that you're able to put it into practice in the way that you live your life. And I want you to notice something.

That Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, his friends, in chapter 3, Daniel was 100% involved in the world from one point of view.

[ 25 : 00 ] Do you notice that? He threw himself into everything he did. And you know, it's all very well talking about being separate. And I can understand what you mean by being separate.

But there's also, the Bible tells us that we have to be in the world. And there was nobody who was in the world more than Jesus Christ.

There was nobody more involved with people than Jesus Christ. Jesus did not withdraw himself from the world and separate himself from the world because Jesus came for the world.

And how is the world going to know that there's a gospel if they don't see it in us? How is the world going to know? But, there's another side to that as well, Daniel was also separate from the world.

So that when the time came, when the test came, and when he was required to do something that he knew would have been wrong, he was prepared to say, I'm sorry, I'm not doing that.

[ 26 : 01 ] And that's where we have to walk the tightrope. And it is a tightrope. It's not easy for us. And it's not going to be easy for you, whether you're at home or whether you're away, to live in the

world and yet to be prepared to stand for what is right.

That doesn't mean to be rude about it. You know, I've come across Christians and they've fallen out with people, people in their workplace, people in their neighborhood.

And they try to make out, oh, well, that's because I'm a Christian. You see, I'm persecuted because I'm a Christian. And the truth is, when you find out what the row has been and what the fallout has been, it's nothing to do with whether they're a Christian or not.

It's because they've been so obnoxious. you notice how Daniel went about his business from chapter one onwards.

He was nothing but the most pleasant, gentle, winsome person that you could come across. That's one of the things that reminds us of Jesus. The common people heard him gladly.

[ 27 : 12 ] They came to him. They were happy to hear him, happy to be in his company. He was a person that they could approach. And yet, Jesus, there was nobody as separate from the world as Jesus.

And yet, he was surrounded by people. They wanted to hear more and more and more. Are you like that? Am I like that? That's the great challenge. It's all very well talking about be separate. I know what that means and it's important to be separate.

It's important to be prepared to say no. Daniel said no. Shadrach said no. When it came to worshipping the great statue in chapter three, Shadrach said you can throw us in the fire, we will not worship.

And yet, there's another side to the story as well, that they were integrally involved in the politics and in the service in the palace. Nehemiah was the same. He was the cupbearer to the king.

How did he manage to get because he was a willing? He was a hard worker for a start. Are you prepared to be a hard worker as a Christian? You say, well, that's nothing to do with my witness.

[ 28 : 13 ] It is. It's everything to do with your witness. When you get a job, I want your boss to be able to say, well, you know, there's something about that person. I have never in all my life come across such a diligent, conscientious, responsible person.

That's what Daniel was. Verse 4, the presidents and the satire, they sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom. They could find no fault.

Isn't that incredible? They could find no fault. They went over the books and they tried to get people to remember his life and they must be able to find something and yet not a thing.

Not a thing. And that's why the king loved him so much and the king wanted him because he's probably the only honest man in the kingdoms, the only person he could trust. No corruption.

In those days, the higher you got, the more you were on the take in a society like this, in Persia. that. And you could get places by taking bribes.

[ 29 : 15 ] Everyone did it. Don't worry about it. Nobody will know anything about it. You just do what everybody else does. Not Daniel. God was first. The more the higher you got, the more women you could choose.

Let's not make any pretense. That's the way it was in those days. not Daniel. Because for Daniel, it was one man, one woman in marriage.

That's what God's way was. And by his lifestyle, by the way in which he lived, God became obvious in his life.

His obedience, his faith, his prayer, everything about him exuded. Now, you say, well, I'm just not like that. How do you know that you're not like that? You say, well, I know, I'm comparing my life to him.

God has made us all different. And God expects us to use the personality and the circumstances that he has given us in the way that he wants us to live.

[ 30 : 29 ] He doesn't expect us to be a Daniel, because there was only one Daniel, but there are other ways in which we can serve him, and in which we can use the gifts that he has given us, and which we can come back and we can learn from these great examples like Joseph and Daniel and Nehemiah who were prepared to stand for the Lord in a hostile world, and they were prepared.

They made their mark on history. Who knows, maybe there are people here and you will make your mark on history. Daniel didn't know he was making his mark. It was only afterwards that he became famous.

You're not famous now, I'm not famous now, but God, who knows what God will do in secret in ways that you never ever thought. Who knows what encouragement you might give someone else?

Who knows what help you might give someone else? You don't know. We're all such big wimps. We're all such cowards, aren't we? That we're afraid.

afraid. And the natural tendency in all of us is just to retreat and to go away and hide someone. Daniel could have hidden somewhere, but he wasn't prepared to do that.

[ 31 : 39 ] He was prepared to live and use his gifts and the qualities that God has given with a confidence. A confidence not in himself, but a confidence in God. God rules.

God reigns. The earth is the Lord's. I don't care how bad the earth is. it's still the Lord's. And the Lord's in control.

And he's doing, he's carrying out his purposes. And he's extending his kingdom. And he's drawing people to himself in Jesus Christ. People like you and people like me.

And he calls us to be witnesses to him in the way we live and the way we speak and the way we are. Seek ye first the kingdom of God. God and his righteousness and everything else, says Jesus, will be given to you.

I want to answer, I want to just, I'm tempted to do this, just, last, the last part of the chapter, because I know that some of you will be asking, why did God allow, remember how the story goes, he refused to, he refused to worship the king, continued to worship God, the king absolutely had to, he didn't have any choice, but to throw him into the lion's den, the king didn't want to do it, it all backfired on him, he was duped into making a law that he never ever should have made in the first place, and that's how subtle we can expect this world to be by the way.

[ 33 : 10 ] Now, threw him into the lion's den, wasn't able to sleep, got up early the next morning, ran to the lion's den, asked, shouted, Daniel are you there? You know, there was a wee seed of faith in the king there, and Daniel, of course, God had shut the lion's mouth, they hadn't harmed him, Daniel came out, and then the next thing the king did was to throw the families of those who had plotted against Daniel, not just the men, but their families.

I know what you were asking, how did God allow that to happen? Because presumably these families were innocent. Why does God allow anything to happen?

You hear about injustice, tragedy, earthquake, accident, all over the world, where people suffer.

You can't blame God for what happened here. It wasn't God's decision to destroy them. But we live in a world that is unpredictable.

It was Darius' decision. You can say what you like about it, it was his decision. Because the buck stopped at Darius, that's where the authority rested.

[ 34 : 37 ] We live in a world where who knows what will happen, where there is ruthlessness and cruelty and unpredictability. We live, that's the kind of world we live in. But I know this, that those men who plotted against Daniel, they thought they were safe.

When Daniel was taken away and he was put into the lion's den, they thought they were in the safest place possible. 24 hours later, Daniel was out and they were gone.

And the tragedy is they took others with them. That's the frightening thing about not following God, following Jesus, that you just don't know what's going to happen.

you're not in the safe place. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we give thanks for our time of worship here this morning and we give thanks for the way in which your word so practically and so helpfully guides us as to how to live to put God first, to give God 100% of our lives.

Lord, we were made for you and we will never find a rest until we find it in you. And we pray today that you will speak powerfully to our hearts because this is the word of the living God.

[ 35 : 54 ] We pray that you will open up each heart today and that we will receive your word by faith and learn and discover what it is to trust in Jesus as our Savior.

In his name, Amen.