

daniel

daniel 6.1-23

Our series is called *Impossible God* and what we're doing is taking a look at a few different situations where God accomplished something impossible in and through the lives of His people. Then we're drawing a comparison to how that impossibility can impact our own lives since we serve the same God with the same power and the same plan to glorify Himself through us.

This morning we're going to be talking about our devotion to God and we'll be seeing it in a text in Daniel chapter 6.

Daniel 6.1-23 - It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God." So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?"

The king answered and said, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives[1] from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is

the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.

Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "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, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."

Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

Your devotion to God is the beginning of the impossible.

Daniel is such a great character in the Old Testament. People point out how high he ascended in the Babylonian government under various kings. It's pointed out that he is one of the few Biblical characters who has no sins recorded in the Scriptures. Of course, he confessed his own sin in chapter 9 of his book, there in his prayer for the people. But, he's Daniel. He's a heavy-hitter. So much so that some commentators even go so far to say that he is a type of Christ given in the Old Testament.

But, here's the deal. The things Daniel is remembered for are those things which God accomplished for him. There's the opening chapter of this book where he goes on his veggie diet. There's his interpreting of dreams and visions. There's his incredible vision of the future in chapter 9 that we still understand as prophetic even for today. And of course there's this text, the most famous in Daniel's life.

But every time it's made perfectly clear by Daniel himself that God accomplished these impossible things through him. It was God that blessed the vegetable diet to Daniel's body. It was God who revealed the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It was God who sent the visions of the future and it was God who sealed up the mouths of the lions. It was God working these things through the life of one Israelite captive in the land of Babylon. And before we go any further, it's important that we understand that, though Daniel in some sense could be a type of Christ, he is also a type of *us*. He's us!

We find ourselves, citizens of heaven, captive here in a spiritual Babylon. While we're here, we're called to live as God's people while also given some sort of responsibility in this kingdom. We're given God's word to understand life and what God's plan is. That's how Daniel knew that the physical Babylonian captivity would last 70 years. And, using a phrase from our text, we have an excellent Spirit within us to bring us heavenly favor and empowering and direction.

We are Daniel!

But he's not just an example *of* us, he's also an example *to* us. Because in him we see the power of God accomplishing the impossible. And again and again we find that the key to Daniel's exploits, the source of the dynamic, Spirit-filled life he led was his devotion to God, through and through. *That* was the beginning of all these impossible outpourings. He was a man who had managed to allow his devotion to God to penetrate his heart, and once that happened, God permeated his life. I mean, when you read these stories, everyone around Daniel is always talking about his God and his devotion and the things his God can do. You constantly see Daniel interacting with the Lord, so much so that often even his dreams were invaded by God to show him something spectacular, to use him in some way.

Now, the danger is looking at his life and thinking, "Ok, what do I need to permeate my life with so that I can have the kind of discipleship Daniel had? How many chapters of the Bible do I read each day? What specific schedule should I perform to unlock this type of power? He prayed 3 times a day, so I better pray 3 times a day." None of that is the point. That's a mindset that we can fall into if we're not careful. Effectively, that's what Simon the Sorcerer did in Acts chapter 8 when he asked the apostles if he could buy the power of the Holy Spirit.

What we see in Daniel is that his devotion was the point. He *pursued* God. He hungered for God. And because of that pursuit, he found satisfaction and God did things through his life. Daniel didn't set out to get thrown in the lion's den. He set out to please God. He lived his life moment by moment as unto the Lord. That's something we're commanded to do in the New Testament, but we see it actually happening in Daniel. Everyone around him knew that he was all about God. His enemies, those satraps, they figured out very quickly that Daniel wasn't corrupt like they were, so they'd have to trap him concerning his devotion to his God because that permeated everything he did. Even King Darius said a number of times in our text, "Hey, Daniel, you're the servant of your God." He didn't call him, 'my servant.' He looked at Daniel and understood that Daniel was living his life in devotion to someone greater than the king of Persia.

Now, as we study Daniel's life or look at ideas in this text, we do see some practical things. We see that he was a man who did spend time reading God's word. He was a man who made prayer a scheduled priority. After all, it was his daily prayers that got him into this trouble. But the act of praying wasn't what Daniel was about. You read these accounts and you quickly understand that he had a hunger for prayer because he had a hunger for *God*. And *that* is what drove him to acts of devotion. It's not the other way around.

And if we're thinking about hunger and evaluating our own hunger for God, our own passion for Him, we should be able to gauge our devotion to God. Honestly, this is one reason to fast. To get a very real look at how present and powerful any other hungers we have may be.

It can be easy to spoil your spiritual appetite. The other day I found a pouch of Big League Chew bubble gum at a store. I hadn't had it in like 15 years. So I got it. And last night, I ate like half the pouch in one sitting. And then, guess what, I got a big league stomach ache. In the same way, I can spoil my spiritual appetite with unhealthy things.

But it's not always bad stuff. Anyone who has gone to a Mexican restaurant knows how to accidentally spoil your appetite. Eat a bunch of chips.

It's interesting that the Bible sometimes categorizes sin into 3 big sections: The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. And you can see that those things are rooted in my individual appetites. My hunger for some object or some title or some satisfaction.

But in Daniel, you see a man focused on God. Daniel was *God's* servant and everyone knew it. And so, when his enemies pit his God against his very survival, we see Daniel immediately go to the Lord. Because the Lord was the source of his life. The Lord was his satisfaction. It was the Lord that he pursued while still a captive in Babylon. And because that devotion penetrated Daniel's heart, we see God's power permeating his life. This is what he was all about. And this is why he's one of the most remarkable people in all the Bible.

We see in this text a calm confidence. The decree had been signed. He went home, opened his windows and he prayed. We see incredible grace pouring out of him. When King Darius came and opened up the lion's den and called out to Daniel, Daniel replied, "Oh king, live forever!" to the man who had literally sealed his fate. But, all around, while he's being accused, while he's being schemed against, while he's being taken and thrown into a pitch black cave, we see a man who is fearless. I love how in verse 11 it says that these men, the satraps, were assembled and saw Daniel praying. He could, no doubt, see them gathered in a crowd below his window. But he was unafraid, because his life was not about financial success or respectability or having a robust career. It wasn't even about survival! He lived with a devotion to please his God. That's what he was about. And because of that, every situation he was in became a conduit for God's impossible power.

1 Peter 3.13-14 - And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.

That is the power that God makes available to us. He says to His people, "You don't have to be afraid if they come to kill you." And I read that statement and I think, "Lord, that's impossible!" But when we fix our eyes on Jesus, when we make Him our hunger and our pursuit, then we will understand the satisfaction that He brings to our lives. The fearlessness and the confidence. That's what we see in Daniel. A man devoted. A man who served *ONE* Master. And a man like that will be used by God in mighty ways. But not just for entertaining miracles.

For the sake of argument, let's take away the lions. Take away the dreams. Daniel still had a powerful impact on the people that God had placed around him. The powerful things that God does in and through His people aren't just for performance. They're meant to bring credibility to a witness who is already testifying of who God is and what God does.

Everyone around Daniel knew him as God's servant. That's what he was about. It's interesting that even King Darius knew certain things about this God of the Hebrews from Daniel. He knew that God was a Deliverer (verse 20). But he also knew that he would always be second to God in Daniel's life. And then, when he saw the deliverance of God's servant from the lion's den, that's when Darius began to really know God personally. That's when he began to honor God himself.

That's the kind of thing God wants to do through us. He wants to establish our testimony with impossible power. Giving us that unexplainable satisfaction. In the text here you see it saying, "It pleased Darius to do X Y and Z." The satraps weren't satisfied with their wealth or power, but wanted more. But Daniel had the satisfaction that God wants to give to us. He had that calm confidence during his trial. He had the grace to show love to someone who just tried to have him killed! Those are impossible things, but those are things God calls all of us to as disciples. But it has to start with a heart that is hungry for God. It has to start with devotion. Living to please God. Thriving in His satisfaction.

Remember, we *are* Daniel. We have what he had to an even greater degree. What we need to do is make sure that our heart is being penetrated by a devotion to Christ so that our lives can be permeated by His power. And our part is to live out our devotion and to make sure we're not spoiling that appetite. It's not about a regimen, it's about a ravenousness. It's about being men who hunger for the good things of God. And, if we want a tangible way to get going in that direction, I just suggest we take up fasting more and more. Because when we remove sources of sustenance, be it food or entertainment or whatever, and just feed on Jesus, that's when we're going to discover what's penetrated our hearts. And that's when we'll be able not to start *adding* things to make ourselves better, that doesn't work, but we'll be able to start *clearing* away those Babylonian temptations that put distance between us and God. And, when we're taking our sustenance and satisfaction from heaven, then not only will God's power and God's grace be pouring out of us in impossible ways, but God's presence in our lives will be undeniable to the people around us. They'll look at you and say, "That's impossible. That peace. That contentment. That control. How is that happening?" And that's when we come in like Daniel and say, "Let me tell you about my God. Let me tell you about what He's done. And let me tell you about He can do for you."

You *are* Daniel. Go out and *be* a Daniel.