

Got Put You Here

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Date: 16 April 2023

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[0 : 00] And you can turn in your Bible to the book of Daniel. Just before Easter, we finished Philippians, and we spent 13 weeks in the book of Philippians together.

I don't know that when we started Philippians that I expected that the Holy Spirit would meet us in so many tender places of our hearts, you know?

And yet, he did, didn't he? Again and again, week after week, it seemed as though the words of the book of Philippians were just exactly what we needed for where we were.

How kind and good of God to do this. I wonder if we could pray together that he would do the same thing as we turn our attention to the book of Daniel.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your goodness, and thank you for your grace. Thank you for the psalms that we have had the privilege of singing together.

[0 : 59] Thank you for those who have taken these psalms and adapted them and made them singable in the English language and provided tunes for us that we can sing together.

Thank you for those who served us this morning in playing instruments and leading us in worship. Father, would you please now also help us as we turn our attention to continuing to worship by sitting under the preaching of your word?

Would you help me as I continue to worship in this time by preaching? Father, would you keep me from any foolishness?

Guard my heart from saying anything that would be unhelpful or distracting. Please keep us from error. Help us to believe and to obey the things that you have for us in your word as we turn our attention together as a church to the book of Daniel.

We ask this for your glory and for our good. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Cal, would you please come and read Daniel chapter 1 to us?

[2 : 11] I've come to one worship service and now here I am. Which reminds me, keep your fellowship after the service to a minimum because I've got to clean the place.

I'm reading from the NIV. Seriously, I'm glad to do this. The NIV, Daniel chapter 1, which has a subheading of Daniel's training in Babylon.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to his hand along with some of the articles from the temple of God.

These he carried to the temple of his God in Babylonia and put them in the treasure house of his God. Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility, young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well-informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace.

He was to teach them the language and literature of Babylonia. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

[3 : 51] Among those who were chosen were some from Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The chief officer gave them new names.

To Daniel, the name Belshazzar, to Hananiah, Shadrach, to Mishael, Medrach, and to Azariah, Abednego. But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and the wine and asked the chief officials for permission not to defile himself that way.

Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, I am afraid of the Lord, my king, who has assigned you food and drink.

Why should he see you looking worse than those other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you. Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, please test your servants for ten days. Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with those of the young men who eat the royal food and treat your servants in accordance with what you see. [5 : 13] So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days, they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the king's food.

So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. To these four young men, God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning.

And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.

The king talked with them and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the king's service. In every manner of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in the whole kingdom.

And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus. Thank you. When you look at the book of Philippians, much of Philippians is prescriptive.

[6 : 39] You can think about the label that goes on the bottle of medicine. When we read the label, it is a prescription. It is instructions for us, directions for how we are to take this medicine.

And Philippians is like that. We read it and much of Philippians is prescriptive. It is direct instruction to us from the Holy Spirit to Paul to the Philippian church passed down through generations, preserved by the Holy Spirit so that we might also be prescribed in our way of life.

Now, Daniel is not so much prescriptive. In fact, you might use a little different word. You might say Daniel is more descriptive. This is a narrative, especially the first portion of the book of Daniel.

It is a narrative about what is going on. It's a story or multiple stories, really. And so we need to keep this in mind as we approach the book of Daniel that it is not prescriptive in that sense for us, but rather it starts out as descriptive.

That doesn't mean that there's not instruction and training for us here, but it does mean that we have to work a little harder for it. And it also means that you shouldn't approach Daniel chapter 1 and come away with the Daniel diet as though this is God's plan, right?

[8 : 06] You want to go on the Daniel diet, you go after that, but don't blame it on Daniel 1, okay? I told a coworker on Friday that I was going to begin preaching the book of Daniel this weekend, and his response was, you're going to preach through the whole book of Daniel?

And I said, well, yeah, but not all at once. We're going to take it bit by bit. And he said, you're going to do it chapter by chapter? And I said, yes, because it is good for us. It's good for us.

So, are you ready? Okay, let's do this together. Daniel chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, and the first two verses give us both history and theology.

Look at these two verses again, 1 and 2. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand. History asks the questions, who, what, and when.

[9 : 14] This is history. In this case, it is in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim. He is the king of Judah. This is approximately 537 years before the time of the Lord Jesus, 537 BC.

Another leader, a guy named Nebuchadnezzar, who is going to become the king of Babylon, besieged Jerusalem. Do you know what that means, kids?

To besiege? I didn't think so, so I'm going to tell you. Here's what happens. If you are besieging a city, you surround the city, and you don't let anybody come in or go out of the city.

It's what? Yeah, it's not fair, especially if you are inside the city, right? This is what Nebuchadnezzar does. So he surrounds the city.

Nobody can get in or out. And eventually, what's going to happen inside the city? You're going to run out of food. People are going to get restless.

[10 : 19] People are going to get frustrated with their leaders because they can't do anything about this other army that has besieged them. Okay? And then eventually, you just have to give up.

Like, you're so weakened that they, you know, send the Trojan horse or they just batter down your walls because you have nothing left. People start coming out of the city because they're so hungry for food. This is Nebuchadnezzar, and this is what he did, and this is history.

This is the who and the what and the when. Now, theology adds another question. Theology moves us to ask the question, why?

Why? Those who wish to know the God of the Bible, those who choose to follow the Lord Jesus, we ask why? So that we can take the events of history and relate them to God's redemptive purposes. We don't want to be content with just knowing, well, what happened. We also want to understand what was God doing when that happened. Are you with me on that? So, Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem.

[11:30] This is history. But did you notice the theology? The Lord gave Jehoiakim into his hand.

This is the first truth that I want us to notice from Daniel. God is sovereign. We've sung that already together. God is sovereign.

What is God sovereign over? What is God in control over? What things does God control? Good answer.

It is everything, and I'm going to give you some examples. God is in control of the ordinary events of life. This is why in James chapter 4, James tells us, you shouldn't say, I'm going to do this or that. You ought to say, if the Lord wills. Why? Because we understand that the Lord is in control, even of ordinary events. The Lord is in control of natural disasters.

[12:32] Amos chapter 3 and Isaiah 45, when there are earthquakes, when there are blizzards, when there are hurricanes, when there are tsunamis, it is God who is sovereign over those natural disasters.

God is even sovereign over things that seem very random to us, like rolling dice. We read about this very briefly in Proverbs chapter 16.

God is sovereign over kings and governors and principals and presidents and prime ministers.

Proverbs chapter 21. God is sovereign over physical disabilities, like Moses' speech impediment that we read about in Exodus chapter 4.

God is sovereign even over life and death, and Deuteronomy chapter 32 reveals this to us. God is sovereign even over the destruction of Jerusalem.

That's why we can understand not just the history of what happened, but understand that it is God who gave Jehoiakim into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

[13:51] Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged, but the Lord gave it to him. This is history and theology. Our God is sovereign.

Second truth I want us to notice from the book of Daniel. God is sovereign even when life is hard.

Imagine the suffering and the pain and the loss and the shame that God's people feel.

Jerusalem is destroyed. The temple is desecrated. And God's people are deported.

Look at verse number 2 again. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand with some of the vessels of the house of God, and he brought them into the land of Shinar, or Babylonia, to the house of his God, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his God.

We should understand this to be in the house of his idol. Right? This is like when kids might say, my dad is stronger than your dad.

[15:06] My kids never said that, I don't think. But maybe your kids might say, my dad is smarter than your dad. My dad's a better hunter than your dad is.

Right? That's what's happening here. They take all of the good things that God has in his temple, that the people use to worship God, and they desecrate them by hauling them off, and putting them not in a temple to God in Babylon, but in a temple to an idol.

What is the message? Our idol is better than the God, is stronger than the God, more powerful than the God of Israel. Imagine the shame, the pain, the loss, and the suffering that God's people feel.

Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, used without blemish of good appearance, skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding, learning, competent to stand in the king's palace.

This is a great resume. And to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank, they were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time, they were to stand before the king.

[16 : 35] Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names. Daniel, he called Belteshazzar.

Hananiah, he called Shadrach. Mishael, he called Meshach. And Azariah, he called Abednego. Here is Nebuchadnezzar's plan. Identify the very best, the very brightest, the most influential people in all of Judah.

And by force, take them away from the promised land. Bring them to Babylon, and brainwash them. Strip away their heritage.

Strip away their culture. Strip away their religion. Teach and train them, all things Babylonian. until they no longer think, or talk, or act, or worship, like God's chosen people.

Daniel is among these exiles. God is sovereign, even when life is hard.

[17 : 58] I have been called many nicknames. Some of my friends call me J-Man. There are some who call me J-Mart.

I have three friends who call me J-R. I don't know where that came from, but that just developed over time, so they call me J-R. I have also been called cul-de-sac because of my hair loss.

Some of you might get that later. And as a freshman, in a brand new school in Moorhead, my friends called me Dwift.

I don't know why. There was no reason or explanation. This was my nickname in high school. I was not one of the cool kids. Is that pretty clear by now?

In the office where I work right now, there are three people named Jeremy, and I can see the other two people from where I work. And so some of my coworkers are testing out the name Marty for me, and we will just see whether this sticks or not.

[19 : 14] Here's why I mention this. All of these nicknames are in good fun. But you can get a sense of Nebuchadnezzar's foul intentions in the new names that are assigned to Daniel and his four friends.

See, renaming them is part of the brainwashing process. Daniel, which means, the Lord is my judge, becomes Bel, to Shazar.

Bel, a Babylonian idol. Bel, the idol, will protect the king. Hananiah, his name means, the Lord has shown me grace.

What a beautiful name. A beautiful name. Moms and dads. Beautiful name. The Lord has shown me grace. But his name is changed and becomes commanded by the moon god, Aku.

How awful. Mishael, his name means, who is like God. His name becomes, who is like Aku, the moon god.

[20 : 22] And Azariah, I love his name. It means, the Lord is my helper. And he becomes Abednego, the servant of Nebu, another Babylonian idol.

Do you see Nebuchadnezzar's foul intentions here? His plan should not surprise us. He is following the devil's playbook.

Paul tells us, you should not be ignorant of the devil's schemes, his devices. What are the devil's schemes? He isolates, he indoctrinates, he disorients, and then he compromises.

And this strategy worked to perfection in the Garden of Eden, didn't it? Get Adam and Eve alone, away from God. God. Indoctrinate them.

God is keeping something from you. He's holding out on you. God knows something that you don't know. He doesn't want you to find out about it.

[21 : 34] And then he disorients them. Did God really say this? Is that really what God has said? And then he introduces the temptation, resulting in compromise and sin.

God's saying this strategy worked to perfection in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. God's saying this strategy worked to perfection that we tried the same strategy with our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But listen, where Adam failed miserably, Jesus triumphed gloriously over his temptation. what we find here is that Daniel is a crazy echo of Jesus remember when I used those words before Daniel is a crazy echo is of Jesus he is first and fainter Jesus comes after him but he's louder look what Jesus has done keep your attention fixed on Jesus but notice how Daniel is a crazy echo of Jesus Daniel learns Aramaic he studies the Babylonian literature and science imagine having to change your name can you imagine how disorienting that would be to suddenly be called a new name what if you all just decided to start calling me Dwayne you know it'd be so weird wouldn't it and disorienting but then imagine having to change your name to where it no longer points attention to

God but instead points attention to an idol like if your name was Joshua like Evan and Kylie's dad his name means the Lord saves what if we changed his name and we start calling him saved by Satan wouldn't that be awful awful or how about Samuel my son his name means God hears what if we were to change Sam's name and we just start calling him devil whisperer wouldn't that be awful this is what happened to Daniel and his three friends what about Elam do you know what Elam's name means

Elam's name means eternal it causes us to think about God what if instead we just start calling Elam tick tock and we just think about time all the time when we think about Elam how awful would that be not only were their names changed but their attention is turned away from God and they become brainwashed this is Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to brainwash them so that they know no longer think or talk or act or worship like God's chosen people Daniel and his friends are willing to tolerate this injustice as well and then something else happens they are served meat and wine and suddenly this quartet says no this is our red line we are not crossing that line we should have to do this we should ask why what is it about this food let me be clear the scripture does not teach us that we should be vegan or vegetarian or pescatarian which I learned a couple weeks ago means you eat fish and vegetables seafood and vegetables pescatarian it does not scripture does not tell us that we must abstain from all alcohol their objection is not on the basis of the food not being kosher something else is going on here the food that they are served they object to this food on this basis the food that is served to the king and to his court was consecrated in a religious ritual to idols they would bring the food and as part of their religious gathering of their worship of the idols they would consecrate consecrate this food and present the food to the idols and then hear this because it's leftover because idols don't eat they bring the food and they present it to the king the next best thing that you have right so they present the food to the king and to his court so for Daniel and his friends to eat this food that has been consecrated to idols would be tantamount to participating in their idolatry and this is the red line and Daniel and his friends say no

I suspect that the pressure to compromise is quite intense don't you think come on guys why can't you just get with the program why do you have to be such goody two-shoes do you think you're somehow better than us because you won't eat this food don't you think our lives are hard enough here in Babylon are you really going to deny us the pleasure of good food and good drink pressure to compromise must have been intense look at how Daniel responds verse number eight Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself and God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs did you notice it there history what happened Daniel says no how does God respond God gives him favor and compassion history and theology again

[28 : 01] Daniel resolves not to defile himself he has tenacious integrity steady character firm conviction there is no FOMO with Daniel you know what that is Josie FOMO fear of missing out Daniel is not afraid of missing out the pleasure of popularity is of no concern at all to Daniel though he is isolated though he has been indoctrinated though he is disoriented Daniel chooses faithfulness to God rather than compromise and did you notice Daniel's humility and his grace his courtesy his conviction does not lead him to condescension his choice does not trigger an arrogant holier than thou attitude he is faithful to God without being rude about it one of my favorite authors Zach Eswine says this holding the right position in an argument never justifies betraying the character of Jesus the first truth that we need to know God is sovereign the second even when life is hard and the third prepare now for how you will respond then friend there is nothing in your life that is incidental or accidental nothing in your life that is incidental or accidental

God is sovereign over all of it we know this don't we friends we believe that this is true and yet when life is hard we tend to forget God's sovereignty when a relationship fractures we say why did he do that to me why did she say that to me these are important questions but infinitely more important what is God doing what is God doing in this moment what is God teaching me about himself what is God showing me about my own heart and my own need of him what is God revealing to me of a lack of love for those around me what do I need to learn about my need for his grace when a loved one dies when a loved one dies and we rightly cry out God where are you I don't know how much more I can take when the car and the water heater and your child's arm all need to be repaired in the very same week it is natural to ask the question God why does it feel like you are so far away perhaps you feel overwhelmed by the ungodliness in your workplace or your school or your campus

or your friend group and you pray

Lord have you forgotten me here have you forgotten me here when your circumstances change and you can't yet see how it could possibly be for the better and you grieve and you lament and then you remember you must remember steadfast God is always at work for his glory and the good of his people my brother my sister God may be silent but he is never absent do you believe that that he may be silent but he is never absent the God who put you here will make you faithful here do you believe that will you prepare now for how you will respond then will you prepare now for how you will follow Jesus's example and reject the devil's temptation will you prepare now by saturating your mind with scripture will you prepare you to have unity of mind will you have unity of mind sympathy brotherly love a tender heart and a humble mind when you find yourself in conflict or you encounter someone who hurt you will you prepare now by pursuing wisdom so that when you are faced with an ethical decision at work you remember it is the fear of man that leads to a snare the fear of man that lays a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe will you prepare now for how you are going to respond to lust will you prepare now for how you will respond to lust will you prepare now so that you don't revile when you are reviled will you prepare now for how you will respond when you are lonely and disoriented church the luscious luscious fruit of the holy spirit is produced by experience it is produced by the holy spirit in us as we endure trials and temptations and suffering and adversity and hardship as we remember that God is faithful that he is sovereign even right here when life feels so hard godliness in the present cannot be explained apart from faithfulness in the past this is why it is so important that we prepare now for how we will respond then verse 17 as for these four youths theology again

God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams at the end of the time when the king had commanded that they should be brought in the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar and the king spoke with them and among all of them none was found like Daniel Hananiah Mishael and Azariah therefore they stood before the king and in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom what a testimony God is sovereign even when life is hard Daniel is prepared for how he will respond and he chooses faithfulness to God over compromise

God honors Daniel's faithfulness verse 21 and Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus hmm why why this verse and why here do you know what happened in the first year of King Cyrus this is when God sovereignly orchestrated that his people would be released from their exile and could go back to the promised land why here why at the end of this chapter chapter one it seems like this belongs at the very end of the book doesn't it I wonder if the Holy Spirit wants to draw our attention to this truth that faithfulness to God is about the long game isn't it it's about the long game do you know what this means about Daniel he likely went into exile in Babylon when maybe he was 15 17 somewhere in that range and Daniel was there in Babylon faithful to God for 70 years and very likely by the time that the exile ended and God's people were allowed to go home

[37 : 42] Daniel would have been too old to go Daniel likely never went back to the promised land that's faithfulness for the long game will you by the Spirit's power be faithful even if your circumstances don't change even if like Daniel you find yourself in a foreigner as a foreigner in a foreign land and that's true of all of us as God's people isn't it what did we learn from Philippians your citizenship is in heaven your citizenship is in heaven but here we are foreigners in a foreign land will we be faithful to God here where God has put us will you be faithful even if your circumstances don't change will you remain faithful even if he never repents even if she continues to gossip and slander what about if your spouse remains disagreeable what about if your spouse becomes disabled will you remain faithful what about when your life feels like it is spinning out of control it is too difficult to manage too painful to endure will you by the

Spirit's power be faithful remember God put you here God is sovereign even when life is hard so prepare now for how you will respond then can we pray about that together father thank you for your word thank you for your Holy Spirit would you please do work in our hearts Holy Spirit would you please move among us as we have asked you to do earlier in our worship gathering and we believe that you have been moving would you move now as we spend just a few moments quietly alone in your presence Holy Spirit please convict please comfort please encourage please grant repentance so that your people respond by repenting and believing good father thank you for the sweet kindness of grace thank you for the richness the abundance of your mercy we are so grateful

for all that our savior the Lord

Jesus purchased at the cross on our behalf father would you please help us as we continue to examine our hearts as we spend time together celebrating the body and the blood the death of our savior the Lord Jesus and as we continue to worship with song please be with us and encourage us it's in Jesus name that we pray amen amen