

The Bigger Story – Faith

Week Forty

In the first two weeks in October, the Bigger Story will trace themes of faith through the story of Joseph, while we study the blessings and presence of God.

From privilege enjoyed in his father's house...to the pit his brothers threw him.

To being property in the slave market...to the privilege of managing Potiphar's house.

To a principled stand against temptation...to the perjury of false accusation.

To the prison of Pharaoh...to the position in Pharaoh's administration...

God was with him

Though we can learn from Joseph, his example and faith, the emphasis should be on how God blessed him, was with him and used him.

Who was Joseph? What's the story of Joseph? (Genesis 37-50)

He was the 11th son of Jacob (also called "Israel"), the first son of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. Scripture says Jacob loved Joseph the most (Genesis 37:3) and made an ornate robe for him. This caused Joseph's brothers to hate him, to not be able to say a kind word about him (Genesis 37:4), made worse by Joseph's sharing of his prophetic dreams, showing him ruling over his family (Genesis 37:5-11).

The brothers plotted to kill Joseph. Reuben, the oldest, suggested they throw Joseph into a cistern. The other brother's sold Joseph as a slave to traveling Midianite Merchants, applying animal blood to his robe, deceiving their father into thinking he was killed by animals (Genesis 37:18-35).

How can you see the providence of God here?

Who set the merchants in motion before the plot of the brothers?

Joseph became a servant in the home of Potiphar (Genesis 39). He gained Potiphar's trust and rose to the level of supervisor, gaining increasing responsibilities. Potiphar could see how God favored Joseph. ***What does this indicate about God? About our witness?***

Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, who refused her, saying it would be a dishonor to Potiphar and a wicked sin against God (Genesis 39:9). However, on one occasion, Potiphar's wife caught Joseph by his cloak. He fled, leaving the cloak behind. She falsely accused him of attempted rape and Joseph as imprisoned (Genesis 39:7-20). **Yet God was with him** (Genesis 39:21-23) and Joseph was given the ability to correctly interpret the dreams of two prisoners (Genesis 40:1-23). Though the cupbearer forgot about Joseph, God never did. Two years later, Joseph was called to interpret the Pharaoh's dream, predicating seven years of good harvest in the land, followed by seven years of hard famine, advising the king to prepare (Genesis 41:1-37). Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of managing the food supplies, elevating him to second only to Pharaoh (Genesis 41:38-57).

Due to the far-reaching nature of the famine, Jacob's family was affected, and he sent them to Egypt to buy grain (Genesis 42:1-3), keeping Benjamin, the only other son of (now deceased) Rachel, at home with him (Genesis 42:4). Joseph recognizes his brothers, but they don't recognize him. They haven't seen each other for about 20 years. He tests them, holding them for three days and then releasing all but Simeon, instructing them to come back with their youngest, discerning if they would treat Benjamin like they treated him...seeing if they had changed (Genesis 42:6-20). Unaware of Joseph's identity, the brothers felt guilty for the way they treated him (Genesis 42:21-22), which Joseph overheard, which made him weep (Genesis 42:23-24).

As the famine got worse, the brothers returned with Benjamin and later, just like Joseph's long-ago dream, his brothers bowed before him (Genesis 43:26). He provides a large dinner, giving Benjamin five times the food, trying to provoke the brother's jealousy and see if they have changed (Genesis 43:31-34). Later, Judah offers his life for Benjamin's (Genesis 44). Seeing that the brother's hearts have changed, Joseph reveals who he is (Genesis 45:1-3), reassuring them that God sent him to Egypt to preserve them (Genesis 45:4-8).

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

VERSE BY VERSE: Genesis 39:1: Potiphar buys Joseph as a slave

- “Potiphar” means “devoted to the sun” and relates to the pagan Egyptian religion
- Potiphar was an Egyptian official, most likely in charge of Pharaoh’s security
- Joseph was purchased as a slave. He had no control over his destiny but...

Genesis 39:2-3: God is with Joseph! God never abandoned Joseph! ***How can we trust God to bless us and make us successful (as He defines and measures success) wherever we are?***

- ***Where can we see Jesus in this story?*** (Matthew 20:26, 28, Isaiah 42:1)
- ***How can you see God’s authority and accomplishment of His purposes here?***
- ***What do you make of the example Joseph set?*** By trusting in God, working diligently and receiving His blessing, Joseph showed God is real. ***How can we do likewise?***
- ***How can you see a contrast between Joseph and his brothers?*** The brothers were free...but were slaves to secret, sin, shame and guilt. Joseph was a slave, but was free...

Genesis 39:4-6: God elevates Joseph and blesses Potiphar for Joseph’s sake – ***trace*** this theme of others being blessed through Joseph. He (like Daniel) never returns to his homeland

- Joseph was **17** years old when he was sold into slavery (37:2)
- He served in Potiphar’s house for **11** years
- He was in prison for **2** years before meeting Pharaoh (41:1)

Genesis 39:19-20: Joseph is sent to prison. ***Discuss*** injustice. ***Where do you see Jesus here?***

- ***How can you see God in all this?*** God put Joseph where he could save his family, Egypt and the world from famine, prepare a place for them to live with him and showcase God’s power and might.

Genesis 39:21-23: God is with him and blesses Joseph...even in prison. ***Discuss***.

This Week’s Readings

Isaiah 24-17 Galatians 5-6	Isaiah 28-29 Ephesians 1	Isaiah 30-33 Ephesians 2	Isaiah 34-36 Ephesians 3	Isaiah 37-40 Ephesians 4	Isaiah 41-42 Ephesians 5
Genesis 39:1-23, Psalm 119:145-152, Hebrews 1:1-4, Matthew 21:23-32					

Psalm 119:145-152: S. Qoph p̄: Praying, crying out to the God of the Bible

145-148: Crying out to God with hope in His Word: His whole heart cries to God – ***How does this connect with what we have previously studied, that God looks at the heart? That we may ask God for clean hearts?*** (Psalm 51:10)

What is the psalmist crying for? Help to keep God’s Word, rescue and salvation.

Why does the psalmist find hope in God’s Word? How can we use His Word in our prayers? How can we use prayer in our study of His Word?

Psalm 119:149: The psalmist asked God to hear him according to His goodness, mercy and lovingkindness (hesed). He asked God to revive him according to His justice. ***How can we pray likewise?***

Psalm 119:150-151-152: Those who persecute must first draw away from God’s law, yet God is near. One way the psalmist knew this was through God’s Word – which he understood was inspired and without error.

- His relationship with God’s Word wasn’t fleeting but a long relationship. His appreciation for the Scriptures led him to understand that they were eternal and the more he studied and meditated upon them, the more he understood their divine origin

This section of Psalm 119 shows:

- ***How*** he prayed (145: with my whole heart)
- ***What*** he prayed (146: save me, and I will keep Your testimonies)
- ***When*** he prayed (147: before the dawning of the morning)
- ***How*** long he prayed (148: through the night watches)
- His ***request*** (149: according to Your lovingkindness... Your justice)
- ***How*** God answered his prayer (150: You are near)

The Bigger Story – Faith

Week Forty-One

In the first two weeks in October, the Bigger Story will trace themes of faith through the story of Joseph, while we study the blessings and presence of God.

*From privilege enjoyed in his father’s house...to the pit his brothers threw him.
To being property in the slave market...to the privilege of managing Potiphar’s house.
To a principled stand against temptation...to the perjury of false accusation.
To the prison of Pharaoh...to the position in Pharaoh’s administration...*

God was with him

Though we can learn from Joseph, his example and faith, the emphasis should be on how God blessed him, was with him and used him.

How does Joseph’s story conclude?

After the death of their father, Joseph reaffirms his forgiveness to his brothers. Though they meant it as evil, God intended it for good (Genesis 50:15-21). He specifically said: “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:19–20) ***What does this show about God?***

As Moses led the Hebrew people out of Egypt years later, he took the remains of Joseph, as he had requested (Genesis 50:24-25, Exodus 13:19). Joseph, while in Egypt, had faith God would eventually bring His people back to the Promise Land (Hebrews 11:22). ***What does this teach us about God? About faith?***

What are some lessons from Joseph’s story?

We can see the power of envy and resentment in the brother’s reactions (Genesis 37:4, 8, 11)

We can see an example of how to handle possible sexual sin: flee! run! (Genesis 39:12, 2 Timothy 2:22)

We can see an example of mercy. Would we blame Joseph if he had turned his brothers away after what they did? Yet Joseph showed them mercy... God desires that we exercise mercy above all other sacrifices (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13). We can forgive those who offend us and serve others.

We can see God’s faithfulness. He does not leave His children (Genesis 39:3, 5, 21, 23). He is with us, so we do not fear (Isaiah 41:10). We may experience trying circumstances, injustice, but we remain faithful to God, knowing He is in charge, having steadfast confidence in Him.

We can see God’s power, taking a prisoner and elevating him to an extremely high level of influence. Joseph’s political power was a gift of God’s ultimate power in the fulfillment of His plan (see Daniel 2:21). ***How can we use what we have been given?***

We can see how God sovereignly works to overcome evil, bringing His plan to fruition. He allowed Joseph to see His Hand at work, “Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you... It was not you who sent me here, but God” (Genesis 45:5, 8). “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good” (Genesis 50:20). Man’s evil intentions cannot ever thwart the perfect plan of God.

This Week’s Readings

Isaiah 43-45	Isaiah 46-48	Isaiah 49-51	Isaiah 52-56	Isaiah 57-59	Isaiah 60-64
Ephesians 6	Philippians 1	Philippians 2	Philippians 3	Philippians 4	Colossians 1
Genesis 50:15-21, Psalm 119: 153-160, Hebrews 10:19-25, Matthew 21:33-46					

VERSE BY VERSE: Genesis 50:15-18: Joseph’s brother’s fears and story after the death of their father

- The brothers feared that Joseph would “pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.” They admitted here that evil was done
 - **Discuss** the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation
- The brother didn’t feel they had the right to ask for mercy, so they requested mercy through the intermediate figure of their honored (and now dead) dad.
- Their story caused Joseph to weep, perhaps sad that his brothers thought so little of him, yet they followed up their request for mercy with a display of humility and respect, falling down before him (like Joseph’s teenage dreams and visions)

Genesis 50:19-21: Joseph’s comforts his brothers and gives honor to God

- First: Joseph recognizes God’s place...and his own.
- Joseph didn’t gloss over the wrong his brothers did, but magnified the rule and power of God. **Where can you see the overarching hand of God directing your life?** (See Romans 8:28)
- “...to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today”
 - **Discuss** Joseph’s perspective, God’s actions, protections and blessings
- “He comforted them and spoke kindly to them” He showed the love and compassion of God. Not just in words, but in action as he provided for them and their families... **how may we do likewise?**
- At the end of this chapter, Joseph’s death is depicted. He died looking forward to God’s unfolding plan of redemption, the book of beginnings ends looking to the continuation of God’s bigger story...

T. Resh 𐤓: Revival, redemption and refreshment according to the Word of God

Psalm 119:153-154: The psalmist’s present affliction didn’t cause him to forget God’s Word, rather it drove him to look for help and salvation outside of himself... He looked to God. **What is our response to trying times? What does the Word do?**

- “Give me life according to Your promise!”: A repeated request (119:25, 107), the psalmist requested to be made alive, to have life according to God’s Word

Psalm 119:155-156: The wicked are far from salvation (Gal. 5:19-21) but God’s mercy is great

- Wickedness is rooted in the refusal to seek God through His Word... They refuse God and have no one to plead their case, no one to save them. **Why do some turn from God?**
- God’s mercies are great and tender and are near to all who seek Him. Like in verse 154, we see God as the source of revival, of life, of mercy.

Psalm 119:157-158: Dedication to keep God’s Word despite persecution and adversity

- The reality of persecution didn’t cause the psalmist to doubt God’s love for him but increased his focus on God and His Word – from which he will not swerve or be deviated
 - **How can our focus and dedication be likewise strengthened?**
- The psalmists observed the faithless world and was disgusted at the disrespect done to God and His Word. He wasn’t expecting godly behavior from ungodly people (1 Cor. 5:9-13) but was jealous, passionate, for God and sensitive to sin

Psalm 119:159-160: God’s true and lasting Word brings revival and lasts forever

- The psalmists asks for God for revival, not on his own merit or how much time he spends in the Word, but based on God’s steadfast love and loving kindness (119:88)
 - **Discuss** how revival is never earned but given in the grace of God
- “The sum of your Word is truth and every one of Your righteous rules endures forever”
 - God’s Word is entirely, eternally true
 - “*The Scriptures are as true in Genesis as in Revelation, and the five books of Moses are as inspired as the four Gospels.... There is not one single mistake either in the word of God or in the providential dealings of God. Neither in the book of revelation nor of providence will there be any need to put a single note of errata. The Lord has nothing to regret or to retract, nothing to amend or to reverse.*” Charles Spurgeon

The Bigger Story – Faith

Week Forty-Two

In October, The Bigger Story will continue to trace themes of faith through the story of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, seeing God's plan, provision, protection and power. They were in Babylon, but didn't let Babylon live in them...

Who was Daniel in the Bible? (see also [Ezekiel 14:14, 20](#) and [28:3](#))

During his siege of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar would choose men who were handsome and showed an aptitude for learning, to be trained in the ways of the Babylonians. After their three years' training, they would be put into the king's service ([Daniel 1:1-6](#)). Daniel was one of these men, likely **14-16** years old when taken captive. Daniel means "God is my judge" through the Babylonians changed it to "Belteshazzar" which means "bel protects his life" ([Daniel 1:7](#)) Names of captives were changed to disassociate them from their faith foundation to hasten their assimilation into Babylonian culture (see [Romans 12:2](#)).

Daniel (with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) did not conform to this indoctrination or the religion of pagan Babylon. God strengthened and protected them, making them thrive physically and giving them skills ([Daniel 1:8-16](#)). **What can we learn about God through Daniel's life?**

What can we learn through Daniel's example? Throughout his life, Daniel attributed all his abilities to God ([Daniel 2:28](#)) and continued his practice to praise, pray, and prioritize Him. He was elevated and given authority due to abilities and "the spirit of His holy God within him" ([Daniel 4:9, 6](#)). He was given prophecies, which cover a broad range of history, predicting the rise and fall of the Greek and Roman Empires and the rise of a powerful king ([Daniel 11:36](#)). Daniel's "seventy weeks" prophecy spoke of a Messiah who would be killed ([Daniel 9:24-27](#)) fulfilled with Jesus. The remainder of the prophecy (the **70th** week) will be fulfilled in the end times.

Daniel was a man of great integrity, he treated others with compassion ([Daniel 4:19](#)). He received respect and elevated roles from powerful rulers. Yet, he never allowed his position to compromise his steadfast faith in God. Obeying God is our priority, over obeying men ([Romans 13:1-7](#), [Acts 5:29](#)). God used Daniel's continual devotion to Him to showcase His power to unbelievers. **Do we bring the world to Christ by being like the culture? How can we live in Babylon, but never let it live in us?**

What similarities do you see between Joseph and Daniel? Both are pulled into foreign lands, interpreted dreams and are elevated to high offices. **What do we learn about God in the way He strengthens and is with them? How do you see the faithfulness of God throughout these stories?**

Who was Nebuchadnezzar?

Nebuchadnezzar, whose name is mentioned about **90** times in the Bible, was King of the Babylonian Empire from **605** BC to about **562** BC. Under his rule, the world-famous construction of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon took place. The city was located south of what is now Baghdad.

Nebuchadnezzar was known for being brutal, powerful and very ambitious, conquering Judah and Jerusalem in **586** BC, destroying the Temple (though, ultimately, all evil/babylons will be judged: [Revelation 18:21](#)). He was the instrument through which God brought judgement on Judah for idolatry, unfaithfulness and disobedience ([Jeremiah 25:9](#)). He would have traditionally worshiped the false gods Nabu and Marduk. Yet, after Daniel successfully interpreted his dream, Nebuchadnezzar declared David's God is the "God of gods" ([Daniel 2:47](#)). After seeing God protect the three in the furnace, he blessed God and stated, "is no other god who is able to rescue in this way" ([Daniel 3:28-29](#)). Yet Nebuchadnezzar ignored a warning God gave him in a dream and he was driven insane for seven years. When he was returned to sanity, he finally humbled himself before God ([Daniel 4:3](#)). He later acknowledged Daniel by his true name, honoring God ([Daniel 4:8](#)).

Background: Daniel 1:1-2: Nebuchadnezzar (“Nebu protects the crown”) conquers Jerusalem in **605 BC** (additional invasions in **597** and **587**). The Temple was destroyed in 587. See also 2 Kings 24:14-16 and the prophecy in Isaiah 39:7. God gave Judah into the hands of the Babylonians (verse 2) because of their idolatry and failure to observe the Sabbath.

Babylon indoctrinated by renaming and training the young men (**13 to 17** years old) with **3** years of education with the intention of making them leave God, faith and culture. Satan uses similar techniques against us, wanting to indoctrinate us into the world by:

- Identify us in reference to the world
- Feed us what the world offers
- Educate us in the ways of the world

Yet these four stood strong, being in Babylon but not of it. ***What can we learn here?***

The name Daniel (“God is my judge”) was changed to Belteshazzar (“Bel’s prince”).

The name Hannaniah (“Beloved by the LORD”) was changed to Shadrach (“Illumined by Sun-god, Ra”).

The name Mishael (“Who is as God”) was changed to Meshach (“Who is like Aku”).

The name Azariah (“The LORD is my help”) was changed to Abed-Nego (“meaning Servant of Nebo”).

VERSE BY VERSE: Daniel 1:8: Daniel purposed/resolved that he would not defile (pollute or stain) himself

- It looks like Daniel made a big thing over a little thing. Yet, the way to walk with God is to be faithful in little things. We might ask, ***“Daniel, why bring religion into it?”*** Daniel realized that his relationship with God touched every area of his life, including what he ate.
 - The food wasn’t kosher
 - It was likely sacrificed to idols
 - Eating it implied fellowship with Babylon’s cultural system
- Daniel didn’t object to his name change: he knew who he was and others could call him what they wanted. Daniel didn’t object to the Babylonian education: he knew what he believed. Daniel *did* object to the food from the king’s table: eating it was direct disobedience to God’s Word.
- Daniel set his heart and mind, was courteous, denied himself and was brave: ***How can we***

purpose/resolve to not defile ourselves and to honor and glorify God?

Daniel 1:9-21: God gave Daniel favor and goodwill with the authorities (see Exodus 23:25) – ***How can you see God’s bigger plan here?***

<u>This Week’s Readings</u>					
Isaiah 65-66 Colossians 2	Jeremiah 1-3 Colossians 3-4	Jeremiah 4-5 1 Thess. 1	Jeremiah 6-7 1 Thess. 2-3	Jeremiah 8-10 1 Thess. 4-5	Jeremiah 11-13 2 Thess. 1
Daniel 1:8-13, 17-20, Psalm 119:161-168, Hebrews 11:32-12:3, Matthew 22:1-14					

U. Shin **⚡**: In awe of God’s word.

Psalm 119:161-162: God’s Word is a treasure: ***how should we respond to such a treasure?***

- He didn’t have a conditional appreciation of God or His Word, but loved both in hard and easy times.
- ***How should we rejoice at God’s Word? Be in awe of it? Value it?***

Psalm 119:163-164: We continually praise God (not from a place of legalism, but awe)

- Hating lying...but loving God’s Law: Here, hate and love fit together as one who truly loves God’s pure truth naturally hates lies.

Psalm 119:165-166: ***How is there peace in loving God’s Word? Stability?***

“This verse does not promise peace to those who perfectly keep God’s Law, for who can keep it? It promises peace to those who ‘love’ God’s Law.” Boice

- ***Discuss*** trust in His saving grace and mercy

Psalm 119:167-168: ***How do we keep and love the Word of God? In our outward actions and also our soul?***

The Bigger Story – Faith

Week Forty-Three

In October, The Bigger Story will continue to trace themes of faith through the story of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, seeing God’s plan, provision, protection and power.

*See how they were spared **IN** the fire...not **FROM** the fire... They feared God more than the fire!*

VERSE BY VERSE: Daniel 3:1-3: Nebuchadnezzar has a statue made (90 feet tall by 9 feet wide). There is a possible connection between this gold relic and his dream in chapter 2, possibly the king communicating that his “golden” reign and authority would never end...in contradiction to God’s declared plan. All Babylonia’s dignitaries gathered to dedicate the image.

Daniel 3:4-6: All are commanded to worship the image...with a powerful threat if they don’t.

Daniel 3:7: The crowd obeys Nebuchadnezzar’s command, “fell down” indicates a total and immediate obedience, prostrating self to the man-made image. ***What does man worship today?***

Daniel 3:8-12: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego are accused by the Chaldeans after not bowing down. The Chaldeans were possibly jealous of their position and promotion. Like Daniel, these three were captives from Jerusalem but were later appointed as administrators (Daniel 2:49)

- Their actions (not bowing down) were not public...but were not hidden either. ***Discuss.***

Daniel 3:13-15: They are brought before Nebuchadnezzar and interviewed. It is one thing to make a stand for God, but another to be firm in that stand when asked: “Is it true?” ***Discuss. What other passages does this bring to mind?***

- ***Imagine*** the pressure on Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego to compromise. The king, the furnace, the music, their competitors and the culture... all of it conspired to convince them to compromise. Yet God was more real to them than any of those things. ***Is He that real to you?***
- ***“Do not judge the situation by the king’s threat and by the heat of the burning fiery furnace, but by the everlasting God and the eternal life which awaits you. Let not flute, harp, and sackbut fascinate you, but hearken to the music of the glorified. Men frown at you, but you can see God smiling on you, and so you are not moved.” Charles Spurgeon***

Daniel 3:16-18: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego’s steadfast stand

Notice: They didn’t defend themselves (“we have no need to answer you in this matter”). They didn’t justify compromise or give an excuse. They were guilty and would not bow. Yet their consciences were clear. ***Why?***

- They knew God could save them but didn’t assume to know His will (see also Job 13:15). They recognized God’s will may be different than their desires. ***How does this apply to all Christians?***
- ***How can you see God preparing these young men to take this courageous stand?*** He strengthened and blessed them in the impure food challenge, now He strengthens them in this greater challenge.
- Many fail in obedience, waiting for something “big” to test their faith before they *really* start to obey and following God. Some fill their life with many small compromises while telling themselves that they will stand firm when it really matters. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego show us that obedience to God in small things really matters. ***Discuss.***

Daniel 3:19-23: Despite the intense intimidation and very real threat, the men stayed courageous in their faith and were violently cast into the extra hot fiery furnace. ***What do we learn from their example?***

- They yielded their bodies, surrendering body and spirit (see also Romans 12:1)
- Before Jesus walked the earth, they knew of the truth of His promise: “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Daniel 3:24-25: Jewish legend tells that Nebuchadnezzar’s attention was caught when he heard the men singing praises in the furnace. If this singing in the furnace is true, it reminds us of Paul and Silas singing in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25). ***What can we learn here? How can we sing and pray in the fire?***

- The men were walking amid the fire... They were bound, but the fire may have only burnt the ropes binding them! Not even the smell of smoke clung to them! ***Discuss.***

- Nebuchadnezzar states who the fourth person was: **the Son of God** (see [Daniel 3:15](#)). Sometimes we are aware of Jesus' presence in our trials and sometimes we are not. Yet, He is there nonetheless. **Discuss.**

Who is the fourth in the fire?

Those who “walk by faith” may experience times of fiery persecution, but He is with us ([Matthew 28:20](#), [2 Corinthians 4:16-18](#), [5:7](#) [1 Peter 5:10](#)). God sustains us ([Psalm 55:22](#), [147:6](#)) and delivers and saves us, eternally ([Matthew 25:41](#), [46](#), [John 14:23](#))

[Daniel 3:26-27](#) Before they were out of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar recognized that these men served the true God, the God Most High and they leave the furnace, unharmed.

Some connect this story with the future of Israel during the **Great Tribulation:**

- Nebuchadnezzar is like the Antichrist, who forces the world into **1** religion: idolatry.
- Nebuchadnezzar's image is like the image described in [Revelation 13](#), that the world will be commanded to worship.
- The fiery furnace is like the Great Tribulation, which will be great affliction for the Jews.
- The three Hebrew men are like Israel, who will be preserved through the tribulation.
- The executioners who perished are like those in league with the Antichrist, who Jesus will slay at His return.
- The mysteriously absent Daniel is like the church, *not even present for this time of great tribulation* but previously raptured, taken by Jesus to be with Him until His second coming.

[Daniel 3:28](#): Nebuchadnezzar gave glory to God, but he recognized that this great God is not his God. He knew a lot about God...but he did not yet know Him personally. **Discuss.**

<u>This Week's Readings</u>					
Jeremiah 14-15 2 Thess. 2-3	Jeremiah 16-18 1 Timothy 1	Jeremiah 19-21 1 Timothy 2-3	Jeremiah 22-24 1 Timothy 4	Jeremiah 25-26 1 Timothy 5-6	Jeremiah 27-28 2 Timothy 1
Daniel 3:14, 16-18, 24-29, Psalm 119:169-175, James 2:17-25, Matthew 22:15-22					

Tau τ: Sought by God and by His Word.

[Psalm 119:169-170](#): The psalmist wanted (and asked for) understanding, according to God's Word...God and His Word transform (**compare** with [Romans 12:2](#))

[Psalm 119:171-172](#): Praising God and speaking of His word.

- The psalmist wanted his words to both praise God and to sing of His word. He, knowing the righteousness of God's Word, was determined that others would hear him praise God and speak of His word. **How can this minister to others?** (see also [Romans 10:17](#))
- **Notice:** He praised God after he was *taught* His Word and truth. **Why is this significant?**

[Psalm 119:173-174](#): Longing for salvation and choosing, loving God's Word. Salvation is from God and in accordance with His Word (see [1 Peter 1:23](#))

[Psalm 119:175-175](#): Our souls need life from God and guidance from His Word. **Why do we need Him?**

- Understanding ([verse 169](#)) and deliverance ([verse 170](#))
- The ability to worship Him rightly ([verses 171-172](#))
- The power to live an upright life, for Him ([verses 173-174](#))
- The strength to persevere ([verse 175](#))

[Verse 176](#): We confess continual helplessness and need for God, acknowledging His power in seeking.

- *“This verse is extremely emotional and full of tears, for truly we are all thus going astray, so that we must pray to be visited, sought, and carried over by the most godly Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God blessed forever. Amen.” Martin Luther*

The Bigger Story – Faith

Week Forty-Four

*In God’s plan, provision, protection and power, Daniel was spared **IN** the den...not **FROM** the den...*

What can we learn from the story of Daniel in the lions’ den?

Daniel, an otherwise law-abiding man, refused King Darius’ decree that all people should pray only to the Persian king for **30** days, Daniel continued to pray to Israel’s God, as he has always done. Men with evil motives, who instigated the decree to trap Daniel due to envy, reported him to King Darius, who was distressed to have to punish Daniel (Daniel 6:16). God rescues Daniel, shutting the mouths of the lions in the den Daniel was thrown into.

What do we learn about God in this story? After seeing how our mighty God protected Daniel, Darius confessed: “For He is the living God and He endures forever; His kingdom will not be destroyed, His dominion will never end” (Daniel 6:26). ***How did God strengthen and equip Daniel?***

What do we learn about men in this story? Daniel’s faithfulness and integrity made it hard for his enemies to find “grounds for charges against him” rather, seeing “he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent” (Daniel 6:4). We are judged in the world by our conduct (James 2:18). ***What does this reality encourage? Compare*** how Darius responded against the men who attempted to entrap Daniel (Daniel 6:25-27).

What is our response, as believers of God? To believe, obey, trust and submit to Him (Daniel 6:23, Romans 8:28, Hebrews 11:33, 1 Peter 2:13-20). Through the faithful witness of Daniel and God’s power and faithfulness, an entire nation came to know Him (Daniel 6:26). ***What does this encourage?***

<u>This Week’s Readings</u>					
Jeremiah 29-31 2 Timothy 2	Jeremiah 32 2 Timothy 3-4	Jeremiah 33-34 Titus 1	Jeremiah 35-36 Titus 2-3	Jeremiah 37-39 Philemon	Jeremiah 40-42 Hebrews 1-2
Daniel 6:10-12, 16-27, Psalm 149, Romans 3:19-28, John 8:31-36					

VERSE BY VERSE: Daniel 6:1-3: Daniel distinguishes himself in Darius’ government due to “an excellent spirit” in him. ***Discuss. How and why does this make him the object of envy and attack?***

Daniel 6:4-9: Daniel wasn’t sinless but had integrity and was blameless in his professional life. ***Discuss.***

- Due to his faithful reputation, Daniel’s enemies knew he would be faithful to God in all circumstances. ***Can the same be said of us?*** They flattered and appealed to Darius’ pride. ***How does pride persuade? How does the pressure that others agree persuade?***

Daniel 6:10-15: Daniel condemned to the den

Daniel didn’t let the decree change his actions. He recognized a higher power. He continued his prayer practices. ***How is the safest thing to do is to radically follow God? To recognize His control?***

- “This was not the act of a person courting martyrdom but the continuation of a faithful ministry in prayer which had characterized his long life.” Walvoord

What were Daniel’s practices?

- In a private room: without intention to impress others
- With his windows open to Jerusalem: remembering the place of sacrifice
- According to Scripture (1 Kings 8:30)
- On his knees in reverence...but also with praise!
- For communion with God and pleading for His will to be accomplished (supplication)

Daniel 6:16-23: Daniel in the den (see also Psalm 22:21-22)

What do you learn about Daniel here? Faith? His example of obedient, humble disobedience? About Darius? About God?

- Daniel was preserved through faith. Though unjustly accused, with a righteous cause, this alone did not protect him. Daniel needed a living, abiding faith in God...so do we!

Daniel 6:24: The fate of the accusers (see also Psalm 7:14-16)

That the lions overpowered them, even before they came to the bottom of the den shows the divine protection that saved Daniel. There was NO natural reason why the lions did not eat Daniel. Only God's hand stopped them. ***What does this show about God?***

Daniel 6:25-28: Darius decrees that all must honor the God of Daniel, following the pattern of earlier in the book (Daniel 1:20, 2:46-47, 3:28-30, 4:34-37, 5:29):

- God's people stand firm in their faith and convictions, He empowers and protects them. It is His power which makes the unbelievers see and speak of Him.
- ***How can standing firm in godly convictions honor God? How can we do so, even when it costs something?***

Check out the progression of Daniel throughout this chapter:

- **Plotted against, Prayed, Praised, Persistently served, Persecuted, Protected, Preserved, Prospered**

Where can you see Jesus here?

- A praying man without blame, faithful to God, was sent to die because of the jealousy of others
- He was thrown into a stone room meant to be his tomb with a stone rolled over the opening
- On a morning the stone was rolled away, He came out victoriously, glorified God!

REFORMATION SUNDAY: ***Who was Martin Luther?***

Martin Luther was German, born in 1483. He expressed an interest in monastic life, moving to an Augustinian monastery in 1505. He obtained a doctorate degree in 1512 and became a Biblical studies professor.

During this time, translations of the Bible were becoming more widely available. Luther, objecting to the extravagance and corruption of the Pope, clergy and Roman Catholic church, specifically the practice of selling indulgence, came to two beliefs:

1. The Bible (not the church) is the ultimate authority
2. Salvation is by God's grace alone (not man's works)

On October 31, 1517, Martin posted these beliefs as a part of his 95 Theses ("Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences") listing various oppressive and unbiblical practices of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1518, he was called to Augsburg to defend his position and his works were found to be heretical in July 1520. He was given 120 days to recant but refused to do so ("*Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen*") and was excommunicated from the Catholic Church in 1521, his works burned.

Martin hid in Eisenach and continued his work translating the New Testament into German, which was completed in 1522. He continued to write throughout his life, including many hymns we sing today. Martin married Katharina von Bora in 1525 and they had six children.

Martin Luther was a greatly influential figure in church history. Though not without flaws and faults, his emphasis on the authority of the Bible and salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) was foundational to the Protestant movement.

What are the "Five Solas"

Sola is the Latin word for "alone" and these five points distinct Protestantism from Roman Catholicism.

1. **Sola Scriptura** (Scripture Alone): The Bible is the sole authority for all matters of faith and practice, the standard for teaching.
2. **Sola Gratia** (Salvation by Grace Alone): We, sinners, are rescued from God's wrath by His grace alone, not by any work we do.
3. **Sola Fide** (Salvation by Faith Alone): We are justified by faith in Christ alone, not by works or the law.
4. **Solus Christus** (In Christ Alone): Salvation is found in Christ alone. His substitutionary death is sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to God.
5. **Soli Deo Gloria (For the Glory of God Alone)**: We magnify and give Glory to our God who saved us, living our lives in His presence, under His authority and for His glory.

As we note Reformation Day, let us encourage each other to be defenders of Biblical Truth, eager to preach the saving Gospel of God to the world, giving Him all the praise, honor and glory.

Developed with the notes and resources of: Got Questions, MacArthur, Hamrick, Bruce, Morris, Spurgeon, Luther, Guzik, etc. Thanks!

