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We determined in our study of Daniel thus far that God reigns. We tracked believers from Genesis to Revelation and they testify to such belief. The Lord God Almighty reigns. God has authority over heaven and earth. God is God, and you are not!

This is true, no matter how great you may be.

To have authority means having the freedom to decide or a right to act without hindrance. For instance, Nebuchadnezzar's authority included 'I say who lives and who dies.' However, God has ultimate authority and the authority Nebuchadnezzar exercised was unacceptable to God. God warned Nebuchadnezzar three times that his authority must submit to God's authority:

1. In the first dream, when the statue with the gold head came apart, the king was warned that although Nebuchadnezzar had great power over the land and people everywhere, eventually his authority would be taken away and he would be replaced.
2. Then, the authority of God was confirmed when Nebuchadnezzar attempted to kill three believers, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the fiery furnace, and they came out unbound and unburned.
3. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the giant tree meant that although he was great and strong and his dominion extended to distant parts of the earth, God would take away his kingdom. He would become insane until he acknowledged that God was sovereign and could give rule to anyone he wants.

These dreams read like a "tall tale." But they did not have TV or the internet in those days, so they listened to dreams and visions instead of the tall tales on television.

Nebuchadnezzar said he believed each time these occurrences happened but never changed his ways. Belief only means something when it is activated.

Perhaps we struggle to understand, too. We think of God as ruler in heaven—that's what makes it heaven! We believe God has given rule to Jesus in the world to come. That is our future hope. But considering the circumstances, we have more of a problem with thinking God rules here in the present on earth. If he does, God has a strange way of showing his authority. As we said, turn on the television—circumstances seem to prove otherwise.

That was the case for Israel, too. When this letter was written, God's people were exiled under this dangerous tyrant of a king. Circumstances did not validate God was in charge. Why did God allow this? Would God remember them? Here's how they said it in the Psalms:

"Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us. Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?" (85:4-6)

They are nervous-anxious-well, how would you feel about the relentless circumstances of living in this land where their religion is held in suspicion? Nobody likes them! Here's how they felt, being conquered and exiled to Babylon:

“You have shown your people desperate times; you have given us wine that makes us stagger” (Ps 60:3).

Perhaps you feel the same sort of uneasiness, considering in our own unsettling times.

But, if you come to Sunday School, God is willing to speak! People who come to Sunday School have shared with me that your studies shed light that this still happens. Resistance to God is the struggle on the earth, and the Bible points out that some believers can be very vulnerable to it all.

Yet during these desperate times for Israel, God spoke to them God helped them to keep their faith. They still kept their faith by clinging to the Word, praying and fasting, not bowing to idols, seeking to honor God, even when their lives were threatened.

In fact, it is in those times for the believer that hope often rises. Isaiah the Prophet writes:

But the LORD will have mercy on [us]. He will choose Israel as his special people once again. He will bring them back to settle once again in their own land. . . . Those who captured Israel will themselves be captured, and Israel will rule over its enemies. In that wonderful day when the LORD gives his people rest from sorrow and fear, from slavery and chains, you will taunt the king of Babylon. You will say, “The mighty man has been destroyed. Yes, your insolence is ended. For the LORD has crushed your wicked power and broken your evil rule. You struck the people with endless blows of rage and held the nations in your angry grip with unrelenting tyranny. But finally the earth is at rest and quiet. Now it can sing again! (Isaiah 14:1-7)

We should be able to say this! All this division and struggle in our own nation will end and we will be able to sing again! Victory is sweet, especially God's victory.

Their hope in God even in this very difficult exile held them safe as they actively practiced their faith.

In the meantime, though, after all those dreams and Daniel's interpretations, Nebuchadnezzar has not changed. He walks on his palace roof patting himself on the back for his own achievements. It was a beautiful city, huge—no less than forty-five miles across; full of wealth, full of inhabitants, with grand houses, beautiful buildings, hanging gardens, which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. He had three palaces, and double walls around the city, one of which was wide enough to drive a chariot across. Everything looked fabulous.

In truth, the city had been built before him, but he improved it and made it strong with the labor of his conquered people. That would be all the people actually, Babylonians and Jews, because he was an oppressor. He was unjust. He was merciless. Taking all the credit, he walked on the roof and bragged.

Yet here is the key verse of truth:

“The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.” (Daniel 4:17)

Do you notice that it is for *all the living*? Everyone needs to know that God is sovereign. When circumstances are bad for you, but you know that God is sovereign, they you know the problem will lead to something good. If you turn and cling to God, and you give God the glory, and put yourself under God's authority it's going to be good.

Do you struggle with faith? Tell the Lord. Many people have doubts because they are hindered by the circumstances around them.

There's a little chorus—perhaps you could sing it to yourself:

Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord
And He will lift you up, higher and higher
And He will lift you up.

But if your eyes are on resentment, resistance, blaming others, keeping God at an arm's distance, not willing to pray or read the Word actively, you will have a hard time. You will get drawn away and deceived with unbelief.

Here's the next verse after the verse which said, “God, you have given us desperate times.”

“But for those who fear you, you have raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow. Save us and help us with your right hand, that those you love may be delivered.” (Ps 60:4-5)

The king did not humble himself and he was sent out to pasture. He spent seven years living in the wild with the mind of an animal. It's quite a creative punishment to bring him to his senses. God's authority ruled over him and brought this king to his senses.

Do you have a loved one who needs drawing back to God? Pray for them! Put them in God's hands. God will go to work. But you've got to leave them there in God's hands. No grasping them back or taking away consequences that God sends. Let God work.

Do you fear current circumstances? God has given this story to help you believe. But belief means you are actively faithful. Just like you can't go to work and take a nap and accomplish something, you can't draw close to God by ignoring God. Practice spiritual disciplines. Pray, fast, give to others—sometimes these disciplines are a sacrifice! Study your Bible. Go to Sunday School. All you need is willingness. Start a small group in your home. Invite your neighbors. Teach them this story. Reach out. Fellowship. Let God meddle in your life!!

You will come out on top if you do. God is sovereign.

AMEN