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We know from the Bible and from Ancient Near East (ANE) historical documents that Israel was exiled for seventy years. In 605 B. C., the nation of Babylon had deported most of the Israelite people and scattered them throughout its territories. Babylon destroyed the infrastructure of Jerusalem and broke down its walls. Babylon destroyed the temple and desecrated the vessels of the temple. The prominent Jews were taken to Babylon's capital as hostages, and were trained to be incorporated into Babylonian leadership, leaving a small number of poor, elderly, powerless people to live in the rubble. Jeremiah was left there with them. He continued to prophesy.

Prophets described the exile as punishment. But they also predicted that the leaders who were taken to Babylon's capital would be the leaders who would restore Israel one day. Leaders like Daniel and Nehemiah.

Even so, they did not necessarily see the purpose for this displacement. This was a tragic time for Israel, having lost their country because they had replaced faith in God with idolatry. The prophets had warned the people but they did not change.

The exile would not have happened if they had repented of this sin.

It is like the difference between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. One heeded the warning and was restored. The other ignored the warning and died immediately. God now raised up a country to conquer Babylon. The Medes and Persians came against Babylon and overthrew it. This was the second country represented by Nebuchadnezzar's first vision.

This new nation conquered Babylon in 538 B.C. Daniel is now about eighty years old and has served in top positions in the government for nearly sixty years.

The Persian Empire practiced tolerance so they did not destroy Babylon. They just moved in and took over. They made it their capital and began instituting their own form of government. Darius the Mede was a subordinate king under the Persian ruler, Cyrus. Darius ruled Chaldea. He's lining up his cabinet. Daniel goes to the top. Daniel becomes one of three presidents in command under Darius.

Even though God punishes, God's punishment always has a positive goal. God has carefully positioned God's leaders like Daniel and Nehemiah in positions of power in order to create a future for the Israelite people. God sees way down the road.

When Babylon fell, Israelite leaders did not fall. Even when they were old like Daniel (81), God gave them vitality, wisdom, and strength to carry on.

God uses you no matter your age. God willingly uses people who faithfully continue to seek God, and has a place in mind for you to serve. So perhaps Daniel is an example for keeping the faith. By the end of the seventy years the Israelite's faith had become much stronger.

Sometimes it takes trials and waiting to break the chains of unbelief. Unbelief was Israel's problem. Is it your problem?

Daniel began work for King Darius:

“Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel's great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire. Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. *He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy.*” (Daniel 6:3-4)

Have you noticed our own governmental leaders who have made it their business to do in other leaders with whom they do not agree? If we join in that battle as if one party or the other has all the answers, we have lowered our eyes. Let's look for the higher lesson. Let's ask that we see our higher call, like Daniel. Remember the words: “Divided we fall.”

The result of this jealousy, rivalry, and desire to do in Daniel was that these governmental officials instead of doing their job had become plotters.

If you are a plotter, your whole motive shifts. You are no longer focused on what you should be doing but on manipulation and scheming. These leaders cared nothing about the truth, about the law, about the king, or about religion. Everything is calculated by animosity.

Watch TV this week more objectively, and see if you can pick that up.

In addition, in this state of plotting, you are blinded by the battle. You have lowered your vision to the short-term. You take on your “enemy” in your own power.

Is there someone who is really bugging you?

Surely Daniel was bugged by this constant opposition; however, we know nothing of his words or his feelings. He is silent. He is not stirring up trouble. *Why not?*

“I will trust . . . in the Lord. I will trust in the Lord. *How long, church?* “Until I die.”¹

“I'm goin' to treat everybody right.” *Who are you going to treat right Church?* Everybody! *How long, church?* “Until I die.”

Well, the plotters accomplished their mission, signed, sealed, and delivered by the king. Even though Daniel knew that, WITHOUT HESITATION OR HANDWRINGING, Daniel went to his home, went upstairs by the windows open toward Jerusalem, and he got down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and PRAISE HIM. (It must have done him good to eat those veggies all those years!)

Daniel was 81. If you are older than 81, you may sit in a chair! The rest of you have no excuse!

¹ “I Will Trust in the Lord,” African American Spiritual, public domain.

“I’m goin’ to . . . stay on bended knee. I’m goin’ to stay on bended knee.” *How long, church?*
“Until I die.”

Daniel is using, accessing, and unleashing the Source of real power on his problem.

Daniel knew something that we must learn. It is described by Isaiah. God said:

“Who are you that you fear mere mortals, human beings who are but grass, that you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretches out the heavens and who lays the foundations of the earth, that you live in constant terror every day because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction? For where is the wrath of the oppressor? The cowering prisoners will soon be set free; they will not die in their dungeon, nor will they lack bread. For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the LORD Almighty is his name.” (Is. 51:12-15)

When Daniel went to the lion’s den, he was prayed up. He was shored up for the battlefield. He went without a word. What battle are you facing? You can shore up for it!

By the time they took him, the King had already been so impressed with Daniel’s witness that he was brought to the point of change.

How often have you impressed someone with your prayer life? This is very convicting for me. And I also am so impressed with the results! I am so impressed that each morning I have been getting out of bed and instead of thinking about all my problems, I take them upstairs and pray.

An amazing thing has been happening. I am more positive. I am more at peace. And, I see God at work more. And, I am seeing answers to some of my prayers.

King Darius fasted and prayed all night. Perhaps he prayed about how ridiculous it was to sign something without reading the small print. Or, maybe he said, “I’m sorry, God.” Or, “Are you really that powerful God?” because next morning he ran to the lion’s den, “Has your God been able to deliver you?”

Daniel shouted out, “Yes, my king!”

Do you get anxious about whether God has the power to help? When you pray, you should not be one bit concerned with God’s lack of power. Your task is to accept God’s purpose and will. God has good reasons for the answers to prayer God gives.

In this story, God confronts another king and King Darius responds. God blesses him with the gift of faith which Darius promptly shares with his entire kingdom. (see verses 25-27)

The kingdom of God is reaching out wherever God’s people are found. Our witness brings blessing to those who respond. Your circumstances may be difficult, like Israel’s in exile; like Daniel’s in the lion’s den. But align yourselves with God’s power and you will win, and so will others.

AMEN

I Will Trust in the Lord

I will trust in the Lord. I will trust in the Lord.

I will trust in the Lord until I die

Repeat

I'm goin' to treat everybody right. I'm goin' to treat everybody right.

I'm goin' to treat everybody right until I die

Repeat

I'm goin' to stay on the battlefield. I'm goin' to stay on the battlefield.

I'm goin' to stay on the battlefield until I die

Repeat

I'm goin' to stay on a bended knee. I'm goin' to stay on a bended knee.

I'm goin' to stay on a bended knee until I die

Repeat

I will trust in the Lord until I die.