

## “Daniel: Lose Fear”

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I do want to encourage you this morning to open your Bible to two specific places. One is going to be in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Book of Daniel chapter 6 and in the New Testament, we're going to be in a somewhat familiar verse in 2 Timothy 1:7. But in the Old Testament, primarily we're going to be in the Book of Daniel chapter 6. Today we continue in this series of messages through the Old Testament of various characters that are teaching us how to lose certain things in our lives that are weighing us down and keeping us from being what God would have us to be. I want to encourage you to be here next week as we study the first of our two female characters.

But today we study a man by the name of Daniel and in chapter 6 we come to one of the great children's stories of all time. And taking place in our children's worship service at this time, they're studying the character of Daniel as well. This is one of the great VBS stories; this is one of the great night-time stories. This is one of the stories of the Bible that even if you've never opened a Bible or never been to church until today, this is a story you are probably familiar with. It's the story of Daniel and the lion's den. It's been told so many different ways and in so many different formats. But just like most “children's stories” in scripture, there is a root, there is a stream of truth in this story today that we as adults, and even those of you of adolescent nature, need to desperately hear. It's a story that shows the dichotomy, the difference, between living by faith and living by fear. We have a choice today: to choose the route that Daniel chose or to choose the route that his opposition chose.

In Daniel chapter 6 we pick up the story in the life of Daniel in verse 1. “1It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and

the king should have no damage. 3Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. 4Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. 5Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. 6Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altered not. 9Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. 10Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”

Now it is the rest of the story that we’re very familiar with. Daniel, unfortunately because of the law that King Darius was duped into signing, was forced to be put overnight in the lion’s den. The Bible records that an angel of the Lord came and shut the mouths of the lions and he was not consumed. Even King Darius himself begged that the Lord would deliver his friend, Daniel. He is delivered the next morning and it is those who came in opposition to Daniel who ultimately with their wives and children and all of their descendants would be sent into the lion’s den and the Bible records that their bones were crushed.

It’s a story that we celebrate, it’s a story we’re familiar with, but it is these first ten verses that really disclose to us this idea, this concept, of the difference between living by fear and living by faith. So today I think one of the questions we need to ask ourselves is what is fear? If we’re going to define the difference

between fear and faith then we need to define fear and ask ourselves what it is. And I believe personally that the Bible has a very unique definition of fear.

To understand this definition we need to go into 2 Timothy chapter 1. In just a moment I'm actually going to quote for you for you 2 Timothy 1:7 and many of you will be familiar with it when you hear it but you need to understand the context of it. The Apostle Paul is about at the end of his life and the Holy Spirit has inspired him to communicate with a young man by the name of Timothy, a young man who has a mom and a grandmother who are faithful in Jesus Christ, a young man who knows the Word of God, a young man who in the verse before this says you need to stir up the gift that is within you. In other words, God is moving and active in their lives and in his life and is doing something. Then in verse 7 there is this pointed verse that defines for us Biblically what real fear is. "But God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Now understand when we use the word fear, we often say that I am fearful of snakes, which I am; I am fearful of spiders, which I am. I might as well confess my faults one to another: I don't like any of them, I'm just going to be honest with you. We talk about the things that we're fearful of; oftentimes I'm fearful of this or fearful of that. Often though, in secular fleshly definitions they are simply emotions or responses that happen in our lives because of a scenario that we are put into. But according to the Bible, true fear isn't just an emotional response. It says it is a spirit that is not given to us by God. In fact, throughout scripture it talks about different spirits. Notice in Daniel 6 it says it was found in him an excellent spirit.

The only other place that you see the concept of fear being utilized in the New Testament is in the Gospel of Mark chapter 4 where Jesus is asleep in the bottom of the boat and the tempest comes up and the men are fearful that they are going to lose their lives. They are fearful that their lives will be consumed. And Jesus comes out of the bottom of the boat, He stills the sea and He asks, "Why did you fear?" And in the context

of that story, what we discover is on that boat with Jesus Himself in the bottom, they listened to the wrong voice. With Jesus in the bottom of the boat they trusted the wrong item. They thought that the wind was stronger than the Messiah; they thought that the waves were stronger. And that's what happens when fear takes place in our lives. It is called a spirit.

One of the things I think we struggle with in the western world is that we like for things to be tangible. We've got to be able to taste it, touch it, and handle it in order for it to be real. But throughout scripture one of the things we discover in John 4:24 is that it says God is a spirit and we must worship Him in spirit and in truth. In Hebrews 1:14 it says angels are ministering spirits. In fact, in Galatians chapter 5 it tells us that we should bear the fruit of the spirit. John 16 says that we receive the Holy Spirit. We are truly guided by spiritual items and things in our lives. And here it says that fear is not of God but it is a spirit. That's how the Bible defines it; it's very unique and different from the world.

There are also two very unique questions that if these questions are happening in your life, then you've given a foothold to the enemy for fear to come into your life. Two specific questions: what if and how can? Now let me share with you where these come from. They come from Daniel chapter 6:4-5. "4Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. 5Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Let me tell you what they said: "What if Daniel becomes the king?" (What if?) "If Daniel becomes the king then we're in a mess. How can we catch him?"

Understand, I know we look at a problem in life, or maybe we're working on a car or we're out in the yard and maybe we say how can I do this better or how can I do this faster. That's not the how can or what if. We know that the spirit of fear has started to imbed its tentacles in our lives when we start saying, "God, how can I go through this alone? What if what I expect

to come through doesn't happen?" How can we go through this alone when Jesus said I will never leave you or forsake you? "What if I'm not able?" Jesus is able to provide for all of your needs. So when we begin to look at life and say what if or how can then what has happened is immediately we have gotten sucked into the spirit of fear in our lives and the enemy gets a foothold. Those questions are deadly questions spiritually because when we start saying what if and how can then we've immediately gone from living by faith that God is able, to questioning His ability to even show up. What if? How can?

That leads to another question. With these questions in mind, how does fear actually operate in our lives? Not only do we allow fear in our lives by asking these questions and not trusting God, but what actually occurs? How does it implement itself? The first thing is this: it is very predatory. It is a predator. You notice in the story of Daniel that these men took counsel against him; they surrounded themselves against him. All arrows were targeted toward him; he was the prey and they were the predators.

I know I've teased you in days gone by that my favorite form of hunting, and I know I'm strange about this and it's deer season then dove season and all those kinds of hunting, but my favorite season is when you call the game warden and then you go out at night and shoot coyotes. That is my favorite hunting season in the world. To me there is no greater pleasure than turning on that spotlight at two o'clock in the morning and seeing two little red eyes go dark in the night. For those of you who are unfamiliar with that process, coyotes are predators. Coyotes chew upon the good fruit and vegetables of the land. Coyotes are the ones who prey upon the animals of the land. It is that which goes against ranchers and farmers. They are predators with one single purpose: to steal, kill and destroy.

Yet it was an occasion in recent days, and if you've heard me tell this story just forgive me, that when we were back in Texas and were engaged in this event, we drove by one day out on a piece of property and we saw a remaining carcass of a cow. The story was that this cow was giving birth

in the night. The birth was not going as it normally would; there was a malfunction in the actual physical process. When that happens, cows send out audible signals to other cows to somehow come and help them. They are able to do this miraculously. When the coyotes heard the cry, they jumped and both the cow and the calf were killed and consumed before help came.

Now I'm not going to relegate our lives to the life of a cow, but let's put ourselves in that situation. What if this doesn't work the way it's supposed to, how can I get through this? As soon as that cry of those questions happens, it's a predator. And that's exactly what happens in this story as these men, these governors, and these princes surround Daniel with the simple purpose of being a predator. Listen: fear is a predator that wants to kill and destroy your world and everything in it.

And it's not just a predator, it's very particular. I want you to notice that in this passage it doesn't just say that a group of people got together. In fact, it says they were princes, rulers and governors. It says there were specific people that gathered around Daniel with the purpose of destroying him as their prey. If fear is a spirit, according to Ephesians chapter 6 beginning in verse 12 it says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Listen to me: you do understand that the devil is real and he despises everything about Jesus Christ and anybody who worships and serves Him. And do you know what he does? He picks you out, he preys upon you and particularly he will bring people and things in your life to instill fear. Because do you know what happens when we get fearful? We get paralyzed. We just stop.

But that's where Daniel comes in the picture. Most of us would have become paralyzed; most of us would have gone into a panic, or a deer in headlights mode. But now we need to see not just how fear operates in our lives, but how do we properly respond to fear. I want you to see what Daniel does. This is our model, this is our example today. "Now when Daniel knew that

the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”

Now I know the story of Daniel in the lion’s den is somewhat of a children’s classic. And I want you to forgive me if necessary in advance, the solutions or the way we respond to fear is going to sound almost elementary. It’s going to sound almost childlike to you, but I think one of the problems of being an adult in this big bad world is oftentimes we forget the truth of simplicity. How do we combat fear? How do we challenge fear? How do we allow fear to be removed from our lives?

The first point is this: you must be faithful in the Word of God. One of the things I’ve heard from days of old is sin will keep us from this Book (the Bible), but this Book will keep us from sin. If you want an antidote, if you want a shot, if you want to eliminate fear from your life, when you say how can God get me through this, the Word of God will tell you how He can. If you say what if this occurs, the Word of God says I am with you and I will take care of that. It is the antidote. We need to drown ourselves literally in the Word of God. And that is the solution to it and it sounds so overly simplistic.

But notice what Daniel did: he did as he did aforetime. He didn’t change his ways. In Daniel chapter 1, he is taken into captivity in Babylon and he is one of those presented before the king. They said eat the king’s meat and drink the king’s wine. He said we will not eat anything sacrificed to idols because the Word of the Lord says not to do it, give me water and pulse and he was found ten times stronger and ten times wiser. He said it is always better to do it God’s way than what the world says.

Then we get to Daniel chapters 2-4. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian, was the king before Darius the Persian. And he had these awful dreams that nobody could interpret because everybody he had around him was fraudulent. And everybody was going into panic mode, saying we’re all

going to die, all these people are going to die. And Daniel says, “Calm down, time out; the God who created you and created me can give us the answer to this problem.” So what does Daniel do? He seeks out God and God tells him what the dream was and the interpretation. What you see Daniel doing in chapter 6 is no different from what he did in chapters 1, 2 and 4, just doing and living life how God told him to live it.

If you want fear removed from your life, you must live life according to the Manual which your Creator gave you. It will eliminate it and that is exactly what Daniel did. He did not say time out, there are so many of them maybe I could get a coalition of the same size, or maybe we need to do this strategy or that strategy. He said no, it doesn't matter if these guys around me are predators or not, I'm not going to handle this situation any differently than I did the diet or the dream; I'm going to do it the way God told me to do it. There must be faithfulness to the Word of God to eliminate fear. If you do not put the Word of God in your life then you will have fear in your life.

But there is a second thing: the fervency of prayer. He got down on his knees and he sought the only true power that exists in this universe: God Himself. It has been said that a man's strongest position is not on his feet but on his knees, and that goes for you ladies as well. He was fervent.

I'm reminded in Matthew chapter 17 when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses and Elisha are there; they present themselves. And you've got Peter, James and John and they want to build the tabernacles and the tents, but Jesus said no, we've got to go down the mountain. And when they go down the mountain, there is a young man who has been paralyzed by disease. He is foaming and doing all kinds of horrible things. The disciples could not deliver the spirit that was moving in this young boy's life. And Jesus comes and says those of you who are faithless, this comes out only by prayer and fasting. And Jesus said there is not a spirit that goes against God that cannot be removed by the power of God operating in our lives. And what did Daniel do? It's so simplistic; there is no need to go to

a conference, no need to read a book, he just said do the Word of God and pray – and what happens? Then you have to leave it in the hands of God.

Which begs our last question: what happens when we allow God to remove fear from our lives? Not when we concoct a system; not when we get creative; but when we do it God's way. This is when we have to fast-forward past the lion's den to verse 26. Let me tell you what you can expect to happen if you allow God to remove fear in your life. The first thing is this: there will be a power shift. In verse 26 King Darius says, "I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end." Do you realize that the very man who wrote the law against Daniel's God is the very man who soon thereafter wrote a law in favor of - without petition, without fight, without coalition or argument.

How do I see that which is opposing me, how do I see that which is against me, how do I see that which is a predator in my life, how can I see it change? You've got to do what Daniel did: be faithful in the Word of God, be fervent in prayer. Who changed the heart of Darius? Loud voices? No; the moving of God in his life. There was a power shift.

Then finally in verse 28 it says, "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius." I think everyone of us today looks at the world that we live in, maybe it's as small as our immediate family, maybe it's as large as our global community, we see the actions that are taking place, the words that are being communicated, the ramifications of all kinds of events and circumstances, and do you know what two questions often come to your mind? What if and how can? What if this continues? What if it gets worse? What if this or what if that? How can this continue? How can this happen? How can this be? And do you know what has happened? The enemy has gotten a foothold in your life and he has instilled the spirit of fear. But do you realize that if you as a child of God, if we as the people

of God do what Daniel did then we have the opportunity to see the results that Daniel saw. Those who made laws against can make laws for. Those who hold positions against can change their position because God can get a hold on their heart and He can change them. And it says that Daniel prospered, that he was able to live his life worshipping God with freedom.

I think one of the lies the enemy has told most of us is that fear is just a part of life, something that we just have to navigate through, we have to live with; it's just always going to be there. It didn't exist in Daniel's life and it doesn't need to exist in yours. So as we prepare for our time of invitation, let me ask you how many what ifs and how cans do you have? What if this? What if that? How can this? How can that? Maybe this can be the day that we act like Daniel; maybe this can be the day when we just trust the Word of God and we just get on our face and say, "Okay God, I need You to move in a mighty way in this area of my life." By the way, Darius himself in this story used the word delivered three times. He said, "Oh Daniel, can your God deliver you? Oh Daniel, I believe that your God can deliver you. Daniel, I know He will deliver you." Even King Darius said you shall, can and will be delivered. Let me ask you, do you want to be delivered? If you need to be delivered and you want to be delivered then you are but the Word of God and a prayer away from being delivered. Let's pray.