

Series: Fearless Faith
“Fearless in Prayer”

Daniel 2

Last week we began a new sermon series that is very timely for Crosslink and for every believer as we face the culture in which we live today. This past year was a year of many trials, circumstances, unknowns, pains, and griefs. In the midst of all that has gone on, one of the common themes that has been prevalent in all of the messaging has been a theme of “Fear.” We have come to a place of fear concerning the coronavirus, fear about whether or not someone is a carrier of it, fear about whether or not there would be a vaccine, fear over whether or not the vaccine is safe, and fear over whether or not everyone will get it. Truthfully, though, that is just the start of it. This fear has led to fear in many other areas of life. Fearing the financial impact, fearing job loss, loss of retirement funds, the mental and emotional health of others around us, the academic liabilities for our children, and fearing what the future will look like. This still, though, isn’t the end. When we look at the government – the corruption that we have seen unfold, the questionable results of the election, the evil agenda of some in power, the blatant compromise of some who claimed to be conservative and even Christian, the Godless direction that we seem to be headed – all of it combined can lead us to a place of fear. But, I want to remind us all that nothing has taken God by surprise. He is not shocked by what is going on, and He is still God. He has not diminished His power or His authority in any way. Because of this, we need not fear or panic. Instead, we must simply walk by faith and be faithful to follow Him. There is much in the world, in the news, and in our own lives that can cause us to fear, but I remind you that **2 Timothy 1:7** declares, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (NKJV). Friends, we don’t have to walk in fear when we truly trust in God. **Psalm 34:4, 7-8** declares, “I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears...The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who take refuge in Him!” Friends, God has called us to live by faith where we live with reverence and devotion to Him and, as we do, we don’t have to be overcome by fear. **Oswald Chambers** said, “The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.” I want to ask you the same question today that I asked last week, “Are you truly living by faith?” There is no way to come to know Jesus apart from faith. Many of us have expressed faith in Christ and have accepted Him as Lord, but saving faith at some point in your life doesn’t guarantee that you are living by faith today. Living by faith is so important that God repeatedly gives us example after example of what this should look like in our lives. One such example is found in the life of Daniel in the Old Testament. Last week we saw how Daniel’s fearless faith led him to be fearless in his convictions. If you missed the message, I encourage you to go back and listen to it. Today, we come to the second area that fearless faith impacts our lives – Fearless in Prayer.

If you have ever heard about Daniel in the Bible, you are likely not surprised to hear his name associated with fearless prayer. Daniel is most commonly known for one story – “Daniel in the Lion’s Den.” You likely recall that Daniel was in the lion’s den because he had been set up by

some who wanted to get rid of him. They couldn't find anything wrong in his conduct or character, so they tricked the king into making a law that penalized anyone who prayed to any other person but the king. They did this because they all knew that Daniel was a man of conviction about God and always prayed to Him. As a result, even when the king made the public decree, Daniel continued to pray, fearlessly, because He trusted in God above anything and anyone else. Daniel is well-known for this faithful commitment to prayer, but I want us to see clearly that Daniel's fearless prayer didn't begin when the crisis came. Prayer was already a faithful part of his life. One of the best ways that we can demonstrate fearless faith is to do so through prayer. So, what does that look like and how can we do the same? I want us to see four truths about fearless prayer:

I. Fearless Prayer Hopes in the Lord, Even in Hopeless Situations (vs. 1-16)

Show Text

I imagine that none of us want to be in a hopeless situation. Hopeless situations often come without warning, punch us in the gut, and leave us feeling depleted, defeated, or maybe completely numb. Hopeless situations occur when we hear the news, "Your loved one has passed," when the doctor says, "There's nothing else we can do," when you arrive home only to find a note left on the counter, when your boss calls you in to let you know that today is your last day, when the judge sentences you to time and the gavel hits the desk, etc. Of course, there are many other situations that we face that may seem hopeless, but the fact is that we don't want to be in this position, we think it could never happen to us, and we go on as if we will always enjoy our best life now. The reality of life, however, is that in the brokenness of this world, we will all face some unexpected and painful moments in our lives. We will all face times that seem impossible, but in those moments God allows us to focus our attention on Him so that at the place of our impossibility we see Him, sense His presence, and seek His working in our lives. God often allows hopeless situations in our lives so that we learn to put our hope in Him.

Such was the case here in Daniel 1. God allowed an impossible situation so that everyone would learn that with Him, all things are possible. Picture the scene with me. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar and his army had conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, disrupted the culture, and taken the best of the Hebrew teenagers back to Babylon to train them for three years. The goal was to brainwash them, or "Babylonify" them, and then eventually send them back to corrupt the region of Judah. At the end of chapter 1 we see that the three years of training had ended, and Daniel and his three buddies were found to be more knowledgeable, skilled, and wiser than all the others. As a result, these four Hebrew boys were entered into the king's personal service. They are now young men around 18-19 years old. One night King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that disturbs him. He is restless and troubled and can't sleep. The word for "troubled" here means "anxious, apprehensive." He immediately calls for all the "wisdom" of the land to help him. The text names four specific groups of people because they are representing four different classifications of the wise men in his kingdom. These are the best of the best that his kingdom could offer. The magicians were the scholars, the conjurers claimed to communicate with spirits and the dead, the sorcerers practiced spells and wizardry, and the Chaldeans were known for their astrology. If anyone on earth could help him, surely he would find help among this group. So, he

brings them together and announces that he had a dream that he desperately wants to understand. The wise men approach the king, “O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants and we will declare the interpretation.” The king catches on that they are sucking up to him and does something strange. He announces, “If you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap” (**vs. 5b**). He then promises to give gifts, rewards, and honor to anyone who can tell him the dream and interpret it. Now, we don’t know why he did this. Some have suggested that he didn’t trust these “wise men” who had largely served his father, so this was a means to test them and get rid of them. Some have suggested that he was just a cruel and heartless tyrant. Regardless of why, it is clear that the dream and its meaning was very important to him and he didn’t want any of them just to make something up to please the king. He was troubled over the dream, concerned about its meaning, and desperate to know the truth. The demand on these guys was great. They requested for a second time to know the dream, but Nebuchadnezzar refused and even called them out, “You have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words.” The wisest men in all the kingdom quickly crumbled under the pressure and admitted, “There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king... moreover, there is no one else who could declare it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.” Can’t you hear what they are saying, “Nobody can possibly do this that you have required. The only one who could both declare your dream and its meaning is one of the gods, and they don’t dwell with men.” The Babylonians believed in many gods, especially the moon god, the sun god, the stars, etc. They worshiped and bowed to creation, but didn’t believe in the Creator Who made all the things they saw.

The king did not take lightly to their inability to get the job done. He exploded and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. If the best of their representatives couldn’t do what was asked, they were all worthless and useless to him, so he wanted them gone. The decree went out, “Get all the wise men and bring them to the palace for a public execution.” This meant that Daniel and his three buddies would also be included. They didn’t know what had gone on. They were the rookies in the king’s service. They had no idea of what all had taken place until Arioch shows up to arrest Daniel and the three buddies to take them away. Daniel didn’t act defiant, throw a fit, act in arrogance, retaliate, etc. Just like last week, he acted with respect towards the official. He didn’t even argue why he shouldn’t die. He acted with wisdom and tact, just as he had done previously. He simply asked why the matter was so urgent. This is a hopeless situation. It seems like the outcome is certain. The verdict is in. They are simply waiting for the time to pass. Nobody can do what the king is demanding. What do you do when you come to “hopeless” situations of life? We can get down. We can give up. We can turn around and retreat. We can wave the white flag. Or we can go forward, believing in the Lord. Even though the situation was bleak, Daniel knew that God has the final word. Daniel had seen God work before and had every confidence and hope that God would work again. Daniel asked permission to see the king. We aren’t told how the conversation went and what all was said, but we do know this – God showed favor on Daniel. The king has already blown up on the other wise men for stalling and what is the first thing Daniel asks for? Time. Please understand this morning that God is always in control. It is easy for us to look at situations and conclude the outcome before the first step has even been taken. Friends, we must remember that God is God, and we are not. Logic says that the king is probably going to be so mad that he will kill Daniel first, but **Proverbs 21:1** says, “The king’s heart is like channels of water in

the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.” Daniel assured the king that, if given time, his dream could be interpreted. Please notice that not one time did Daniel take credit for this. **Warren Wiersbe** said it well, “By faith, Daniel promised to show the king his dream and the interpretation, for he knew that the Lord would answer prayer.” This situation seemed hopeless to everyone else, but it wasn’t hopeless to Daniel because he had one hope – he hoped in the Lord. Like **Jeremiah 14:22** declares, “Are there any among the idols of the nations who give rain? Or can the heavens grant showers? Is it not You, O Lord our God? Therefore we hope in You, for You are the one who has done all these things.” When the circumstance looked bleak, Daniel lifted his eyes above the circumstance put his hope in the Lord. We would be wise to do the same and heed the words of **Psalm 31:24**, “Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the Lord.” What in your life have you given up on? What is that one situation or circumstance that seems impossible? God is calling us to look to Him today and hope in Him.

II. Fearless Prayer Rests in the Compassion of God (vs. 17-18)

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Daniel leaves the king’s presence and goes back to his house, informing his friends of what is going on. Verse 18 tells us something profound. They agreed together that they must pray and ask God to show His compassion and mercy and intervene in the situation. Just as they shared in the judgment that had been determined, they would also share in the intercession that was needed. These four seemed so small in light of this huge kingdom. They seemed so insignificant compared to the king. They were just rookies in the king’s service. What could they possibly do? Well, they could pray and they could trust that God could do the impossible. There are two things that I want us to see here.

First, the One, True, Almighty God is THE God of heaven. The Babylonians worshiped all these aspects of creation, many of which were a part of the heavens – the stars, the sun, the moon, etc. To call God THE GOD of heaven was to declare that Jehovah has all power and authority over the heavens. **Psalm 96:4-5** says it best, “For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.” The Hebrew young men knew that the God they worshiped and served was above all others and there is nothing that He couldn’t do. This clearly impacted how they prayed.

Second, the One, True, Almighty God of heaven is a God of mercy and compassion. This is totally different than the false gods of the Babylonians. They have already admitted that their gods didn’t dwell among them and apparently didn’t care for them either. We see the same in 1 Kings 18 with the false prophets of Baal, who desperately cried out to their god, but he didn’t hear them, didn’t answer them, and didn’t care. Why? Because he was a false, dead, lifeless god. Mankind is inherently religious and will make a god or an idol out of anything – sports, food, pets, shrines, architecture, and even good things like family. But, none of those things can save your soul and do for you what only God can do for you. Many like to think of God as if He is some great big dictator “watching us from a distance,” uninvolved and uninterested in the affairs of man. However, that is not the God of the Bible. The One, True, Living, Almighty God of heaven is so intimately aware of what is going on in our world and so personally interested in our lives that He has made a way for each of us to know Him. In the Old Testament we see this repeatedly as we

find the blessings available to those who hope in the Lord. **Psalm 130:7** announces, “O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is lovingkindness, and with Him is abundant redemption.” Listen to the practical ways God compassionately works in the lives of those who hope in Him, **Psalm 146:5-10**, “How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, Who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them; Who keeps faith forever; Who executes justice for the oppressed; Who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous; the Lord protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, but He thwarts the way of the wicked. The Lord will reign forever, Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!”

The simple truth is that Daniel and his buddies had a relationship with God, and in that relationship they had every comfort that God was going to work in some way. Do you have a relationship with God? Are you looking to Him? Relying on Him? Resting in Him? We don’t read that they were panicking, worrying, sweating it out, assuming the outcome, etc. We simply read that they prayed. We can envision them getting on their knees and calling out to God, fully believing that He would answer their prayers. **Warren Wiersbe** said it well, “When God’s people face a crisis, they need to follow the example of Daniel and his friends and take the matter to the Lord in prayer. An invitation to prayer is an invitation to omnipotence, for prayer engages the Omnipotent God and brings Him into our human affairs.” Nebuchadnezzar is all troubled and can’t sleep because he doesn’t know the meaning of the dream. The worldly wise men are all worked up because they have been sentenced to death. Daniel and his three buddies seem as cool as a cucumber. Why? Because they know the Living Almighty God of heaven and know that He is compassionate towards those who love Him. They don’t know how He is going to work. They don’t know what He is going to do or when He’s going to do it, but they’re confident that He is going to answer and they rest in this fact.

III. Fearless Prayer Trusts in the Power and Plan of God (vs. 19-23)

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Daniel and his buddies pray, believing that God will show compassion and answer. Then in the night God gives Daniel a vision. There is some debate about whether this was a dream as Daniel slept, or if these four boys were praying all night long and God gave him the vision. Regardless, what we know clearly is that God revealed the king’s dream and its interpretation to Daniel. This is significant. One of the key words used in this passage eight times is the word “secret.” It is referring to that which is hidden. The king had a dream that he could not understand. He demanded something of his officials that they could not understand. However, there is nothing that God doesn’t understand. He is omniscient, knowing all things, and omnipotent, having the power to do all things. We wonder, “What back door deals are being made? What is this country’s influence in this area? What is on that laptop? Who paid who? Who directed this or that?” God does not wonder any of this, because He knows it all. I also want to remind you, the things you think are hidden in your own life, God knows, and we will give an account for it in our lives. In this case, God knew the dream because He was the One who gave it. We like to put God in a box, but we must remember that God is God, and we are not. He can speak to and through any vessel of His choosing, including a pagan Gentile king. Because God is the author of the dream, He could also reveal the

interpretation to someone else. God does so when he lets Daniel in on what He is doing. As soon as God reveals the secret to Daniel, he responds in praise. His praise declares many things about God, but it ultimately shows us why he was praying in the first place. It's easy to say that Daniel prayed because he knew that God can do all things, but specifically he shows us two things:

A. God Has All Power

Daniel's statement of praise reveals the depth of his faith in God. He said, "God, all wisdom and power belong to You." He has all knowledge and knows all mysteries. He has all power and there is absolutely nothing He can't do. His power is so great that He can even "change the times and epochs." This is an evidence of absolute, sovereign power. Daniel is giving a contrast here. The Babylonians set the times and the seasons by the movements of the sun, moon, and stars. Daniel is saying, "God, You direct all of that. If You want the day to be long, the season to be short, the stars to shine or fall, You alone have the power to do this!" Not only this, but God has power over and above all kings. Kings in his day constantly schemed, manipulated, and fought to conquer lands, expand kingdoms, and conquer the world. But, high above all that, Daniel knew that the Almighty God of heaven was so powerful that He could remove or establish any king. This is the power of our God!

B. God Has a Plan in All That We Face

The underlying message in all that Daniel is saying is simple, "God, You have all power and authority. You know all things. And, You are working to accomplish Your purposes in the world, even in my life." Daniel understood clearly that THE living God of heaven not only created the world, but He was still working in the earth to accomplish His plans and purposes. Because of the nature of this dream, he clearly praised God because he knew that God was also the God of the future. According to Malachi 3:6, God does not change. He has always been God, He is still God, and He always will be God. Men can reject Him, deny Him, dismiss Him, and even debate Him, but you cannot displace Him. He alone is God. Knowing the nature of the dream and what God had revealed, Daniel praised God because he knew that God's plans and purposes were for God's glory and his good. What was God's purpose in all of this? I don't want to give it away just yet. We will see it as the book unfolds in the coming weeks. For now, however, I do want to emphasize something. Not one time have we seen Daniel complain, question, or even argue with God. Think of his situation. How would you respond? We'd probably say, "God, where are You? Why have You let me be separated from my family? Why can't I be with the people that I love? Why do I have to go to this crummy school that rejects You? Why am I having to accept a new name? Why can't I just go ahead and eat the food that the king offered? God, why did You allow me to serve the king only to be told now that he wants to kill me? God, what are You doing? Why are You doing it? What is the purpose in all of this?" There are times that we simply don't understand, and our suffering seems pointless. All we feel is the hurt and all we hear are the questions. What should we do then? We should stop asking the "Whys?" and start thinking on the Who we should be turning to. **Isaiah 55:8-9** declares, " 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and

My thoughts than your thoughts.’ ” When we don’t understand, we can still trust in the power and plan of God. We can trust in His promise in **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Daniel doesn’t yet know every detail of what God is doing, but what God has revealed leads him to a final step.

IV. Fearless Prayer Moves Us to Courageously Tell Others About God (vs. 24-30)

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Daniel gets word to the official, “Don’t destroy the wise men. I have the interpretation of the dream.” Immediately, Daniel is rushed into the king’s presence and asked directly by the king, “Are you able to tell me the dream and its interpretation?” Can you imagine the pressure that he felt in that moment? If he is wrong, he is going to die. And, the message that he had to share was not easy. In fact, frankly the dream and its interpretation was a message of judgment for Nebuchadnezzar and a message of the rule and reign of another King. This is not an easy task. I love what Daniel did. He didn’t wait, debate, or hesitate in any way. He immediately said, “None of the wise men of the land could tell you the dream or its interpretation; however, there is a True and Living God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has given you the dream and He has shown you what is to come. But, King, please know this – this mystery was not made known to me because of any skill or wisdom within me, because I am just a man. God alone did this so that you might know Him and His plans.” Do you see what Daniel is doing? He is standing before a pagan, cruel, wicked king with an impossible demand. The death warrant has already been served and they are just awaiting the time. Still Daniel says, “King, there is a God in heaven Who knows all things and has all power. He has a wisdom that nobody and nothing in this world can compare with. And, King, this God in heaven cares for you. He has given you this dream to show you what is to come. That’s how important you are to God.” Please understand that Daniel is not the hero of the story, the chapter, or even the book of Daniel. God alone is the hero, and He was constantly working and moving to accomplish His purposes. Daniel understood this, so he gave God alone all the glory and showed how the God of heaven was far superior than any and every god in Babylon. From verses 31-45 Daniel relayed the dream and its interpretation. I will not get into the details of that today. The simple summary is that the king’s dream depicted four kingdoms that would rise, only to fall. There would be Babylon, then the Medes and Persians, then the Grecian kingdom, then the Roman Empire. In the end, however, there would be a Kingdom that would rise that was “made without human power” meaning that it was created by God and not by man, and this final kingdom would be an eternal kingdom. It would last forever. He is speaking of the Kingdom that will be established when Jesus comes again the second time. Remember **Isaiah 9:7** prophesied, “There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his Kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.” Daniel speaks of this Kingdom in **verses 44-45 (Show Text)**. You can hear Daniel’s tone in his words. He is telling the king of Babylon about this Heavenly King who will rule and reign for all eternity, and he is inviting the most powerful man in his day to humble himself and believe in the True King still to come. How did he respond? (**Show Daniel 2:46-49**). Nebuchadnezzar didn’t trust in God that day, but

he did keep his word to bless the interpreter of the dream, and the seeds of the truth were planted in his heart. In the end, Daniel and his buddies were promoted to positions of leadership in the kingdom. How could a group of guys go from death row to chief positions? How could God take a nobody and make them a somebody? How could God open the heart of a heartless king? How could God reveal knowledge that nobody could possibly know? The answer is simple – He does all this and more through fearless prayer. What seems impossible in your life? What and who are you praying for? Let's be fearless in prayer, trusting God to do the impossible and giving Him all the glory!