THRIVE – **WK 7 – Praying in Babylon**

**It started terrible -kidnapped – but over the yrs God was faithful. Looking through the scrapbook. Remember that time we were in the cafeteria, threatened, furnace, the visions - job promotions – the revivals - God did the miraculous. God’s faithfulness, favor, and provision in a hostile environment…**

**Will God do it again? Or, am I too old for God to care.**

**At least 84yrs old. 66 yrs passed – since they were abducted, castrated, names changed, and forced into a hostile culture.**

**Daniel had lived through… 7 kings / 2 empires**

**Nebechunezzer - Amel-Merdach - Neri-glissar - Laboro-soar-chad -**

**Naboni-dus - and the crown prince Belshazzer – now King Cyrus**

**Babylon, attacked by Persia - grand empire is birthed. Persian Empire. Iran (Persia) & Iraq (Babylon) conflict to this day**

**Important to remember Daniel is a scrapbook. Snapshots - not details, of over 70yrs of history. Big gaps in the story – not always in order.**

**We start 66 yrs since chp 1, picks up shortly after chap 5**

**By far – one of the most famous stories in the bible.**

**The New Boss**

**Daniel 6:1** **Darius the Mede (who is this Darius guy? Not mentioned in History?)**

**Darius the great existed – but 15yrs later/ after Cyrus/ not a Mede**

**Most likely a different Darius – or a timeline that is off - or just a title name - Darius means, “the one who holds the Sceptor”**

**Cyrus is king historically – This guy is most likely the assigned regent/ Governor – Gabaru – he fits the timeline**

**This is important because Daniel is not a Myth – this is real**

**Daniel 6:1** **Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces, and he appointed a high officer to rule over each province. 2 The king also chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the high officers and protect the king’s interests. (new management – Daniel is demoted, but kept on at a high level of the team.) 3 Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. (how long?) Because of Daniel’s great ability, the king (regent) made plans to place him over the entire empire.**

**Daniel was favored and respected. Highly loved – even by those who did not know God. Despite the situation Thrived!**

**4 Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, (jealous of his favor) but they couldn’t find anything to criticize or condemn. (Daniel didn’t cook the books, no rumors of sexual harassment, not secret pics, no abuse of power.) He (Daniel) was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy. (even his enemies saw his great work ethic – couldn’t find anything - this guy is good!)**

**Work life - Three ingredients to success at work:**

**1. Faithful 2. (always) responsible 3. (completely) trustworthy.**

**Christians should be the best workers! With an excellent spirit.**

**Kind of person you love to be around. He had a great rapport!**

**\* Being a light is not just about doing a job – but doing it well!**

**Just a thought – Daniel was about 84 – for those of you who are old… being old, does not give you a pass for living a godly life. You don’t get to be a grump, negative, or crotchety. You never retire from God.**

**Daniel 5:5 So they concluded, “Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion.” (They knew Daniel is a committed follower of God. The one thing – let’s attack his faith!)**

**A powerful tool of enemy in our life too – He will attack your faith - to doubt God, to walk in fear, to compromise…**

**The Conspiracy**

**Daniel 5:6 So the administrators and high officers went to the king and said, “Long live King Darius! 7 We are all in agreement - we administrators, officials, high officers, advisers, and governors - (Daniel was never going to be “one of them” - he was diff. they did not live for God - They conspired together…) that the king should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty - will be thrown into the den of lions. (establish your power) 8 And now, Your Majesty, issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked.” (Neb as ruler changed his mind daily - Persia was different) 9 So King Darius signed the law.**

**They used Daniel’s integrity and walk with God against him.**

**They changed the law, so doing something right became wrong**

**There are those today who conspire against followers of God**

**The Prayer**

**(prayer outlawed 30 days – easy for some of us…) Daniel 5:10 But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God. (case of civil disobedience – we are to obey the laws of the land (Rom 13) except when they contradict the he laws of God) 11 Then the officials went together to Daniel’s house and found him praying and asking for God’s help. (they knew he was a praying man – it was a set up)**

**Prayer life - Three things about Daniel’s Prayer life - that stand out**

**James 5:16 - “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful & effective.**

* **The first response was – pray**

**Prayer is an indicator of our dependency on God.**

* **It was not a crises prayer life, it was a lifestyle prayer life “as always”**
* **He lived with his windows open – unashamed of his God!**

**Putting his possessions & position on the line, he obeyed God**

**There are those who will try to set you up – what we to do? We do, what we always do – obey God.**

**The Lion’s**

**(Conspirators went to Darius and told him- like lions ready to attack and devour) 5:13 Then they told the king, “That man Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, (racist) is ignoring you and your law. He still prays to his God three times a day.” 14 Hearing this, the king was deeply troubled, and he tried to think of a way to save Daniel. (Darius really liked Daniel) He spent the rest of the day looking for a way to get Daniel out of this predicament. (That night the conspirators again went to Darius – you must enforce the law.) 16 So at last the king gave orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions.**

**Reality is – following God will often bring you enemies and might get you tossed in the pit – with lions**

**16b The king said to him, “May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you.”17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed the stone with his own royal seal and the seals of his nobles, so that no one could rescue Daniel. (grandpa in the lion’s den)**

**What it might have been like… (pic)**

**Much like Jesus tomb was marked with a legal seal.**

**18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting. He refused his usual entertainment and couldn’t sleep at all that night. (was sick over it – could not eat or play video games)**

**Through history hundreds of thousands of Christians were devoured by wild beasts like this. Martyred for their faith.**

**But not today… 5:19 Very early the next morning, the king got up and hurried out to the lions’ den. 20 When he got there, he called out in anguish, “Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?” (notice Daniel response) 21 Daniel answered, “Long live the king! (??? I might have said – come in and see. Daniel understood that people are not enemy.) 22 My God sent his angel to shut the lions’ mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty.” (I obeyed God – I respectfully disagreed. I did not conspire against you or talk negative about you. OR – plot against you.) 23 The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him, for he had trusted in his God.**

**Hungry Hungry Lions**

**(That’s where the story usually ends - next part is not found in kid’s bibles) Daniel 5:24 Then the king gave orders to arrest the men who had maliciously accused Daniel. He had them thrown into the lions’ den, along with their wives and children. The lions leaped on them and tore them apart before they even hit the floor of the den. (lovely…)**

**(Daniel leads another revival) 25 Then King Darius sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: “Peace and prosperity to you! 26 “I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel. For he is the living God, and he will endure forever. His kingdom will never be destroyed, and his rule will never end. 27 He rescues and saves his people; he performs miraculous signs and wonders in the heavens and on earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.”28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.**

**3 reasons why a loving God who’s allows this to happen:**

**Some trials born of Correction- Jonah / some trials born of Instruction- Disciples / some trials born of Glorification- Daniel**

**The rest of Daniel - 7-12 visions take place over the course of chp 1-6**

**(chart) The rest of Daniel are visions Daniel had in his lifetime.**

**1-6 = Convincing gentiles of God’s power / about judgement**

 **Daniel interprets others dreams– stories of God’s protection**

**7-12 = Convincing Israel of God’s purpose / about hope**

 **Angels interpret Daniels dreams– prophecies of God’s protection**

**A few thoughts about the visions of 7-12**

**Daniel 7:16-18, 1 Thess 4:13-18/ John 13:18-19/ Matt 11:2-5/ Rev 13:11-18**

**Biblical prophecies purpose is to provide hope and confidence in God’s control and ability - not to satisfy curiosity or stir speculation**

**Speculation tend to make Christians look foolish and arrogant.**

**Looking back at attempts to figure it out… no one got it right – Resulting in weird ideas and in worst cases – strange cults.**

**Back to the story – I want to focus on Daniel 5:20**

**That morning Darius woke up – and called out into the darkness – Daniel 5:20 “Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?” \* Daniel response – YES!!!**

**\* Is your God able? Are there any limits to God's ability?**

**Ephesians 3:20 - Now unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. according to the power that works in us." (Now to Him who is able to do infinitely more than all we ask or imagine…)**

**Do you believe that God is able to do what He said He would? Then why are you worried?**

**What lion are you facing?**

**1 Peter 5:8 - Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.**

**We live in the lion’s den and they are hungry! But, God is able!**

**When you face your lions - What is God able to do?**

**Years of trusting God in a place of hostility and trial – Daniel knew this**

* **Defend you – in the face of accusers**

**Daniels accusers tried over and over to speak death into this life.**

**When the enemy attacks and accuses you – you’re nothing, God doesn’t want you – Jesus declares! You are mine!**

**Romans 8:1 - No condemnation in Christ!**

**Romans 8:31 “If God is for us, who can be against us?**

* **Protect you – in the middle of attack – in that lion’s den**

**I wish I could tell you if you follow Jesus, nothing bad will happen to you – but I can’t.**

**In a time of trial and suffering Paul wrote - 2 Tim 1:12 - …I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.**

**Jesus holds you in his nail scarred hand!**

**Note God did not deliver Daniel from the Lion’s den – He delivered him through the Lion’s den.**

* **Keep you – in the middle of trials and temptation**

**Face to face w/ a lion - When tempted - when we stumble - when we fall**

**Jude 1:24 Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault.**

**Hebrews 2:18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (tempted = tested with trials)**

**Philippines 1:6 – What God starts in you is able / will finish it**

**Abe continually blew it - Romans 4:20-21 - Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.**

* **Sustain you – in the middle of chaos, trials, and pain - when feeling alone, isolated, weak, barely holding on… God sustains.**

**Romans 16:25 Now all glory to God, who is able to make you strong, (establish you – lit. to fix and firmly set) just as my Good News says. This message about Jesus Christ has revealed his plan for you…**

**Do you feel broken? God is able to fix you – establish you – set you firmly in a new place. Give you strength!**

**We are not alone – Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5, Matthew 28:20)**

**In Jesus Christ – 2 Cor 9:8 God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work**

**I am reminded of the two blind men who came to Jesus – help us!**

**Matt 9:28-30 And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." (then touched their eyes- Jesus is able & willing)**

* **Save you – you’re not too far gone.**

**Hebrews 7:25 He is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. (Jesus) He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.**

**Do you believe that God is able and willing to touch you?**

**How do we know God is for us? The Cross!!!**

**How do we know God is able? The resurrection!!!**

**What happens to Daniel? Did he go home? No, he never made it home.**

**We don’t know how he died or where - 6 cities claim burial (Iraq/ Iran)**

**Bible picks up the story in Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah - King Cyrus of Persian – let’s those who can, return home… it had been 70 years.**

**In all this we find this - Despite any incredibly difficult situation, knowing that God is always in control – we can Thrive!**