

Faith not Fear - Favor not Failure A Believer Continues

- 11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,
12 “Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.
13 “Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king’s choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see.”
14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.
15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king’s choice food.
- 16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.
17 As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of* literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all *kinds of* visions and dreams.
18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.
19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they^b entered the king’s personal service.
- 20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the^d magicians *and* conjurers who *were* in all his realm.
21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.¹

Thank you to Rich Garbarino for giving a very moving testimony last week. He shared their story of Nick, and it helped up to remember that the so-called "Prosperity Gospel" is no gospel at all, but is in fact false teaching. We are never assured the lack of difficulties in this life as Believers, however, we are learning that even when our world is rocked we are able to operate in the realm of faith instead of the realm of fear. Remember Daniel and his friends were confronted with a decision about following God's Word. They met it with faith, but Asphenaz met it with fear.

¹ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.* (1995). (Da 1:11–21). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

I want to encourage you guys this morning to feed your faith and your fears will slowly starve to death. I heard a preacher say years ago to stop worrying about things you cannot change. That is putting too much faith in the "what ifs."



We walk by faith and not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Let's review where we've been these past three weeks. I went back into the archives of newspapers printed in 586 BC and found a front page story on Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king, being used of God to bring judgment on the wicked King Jehoiakim and the people of Judah.

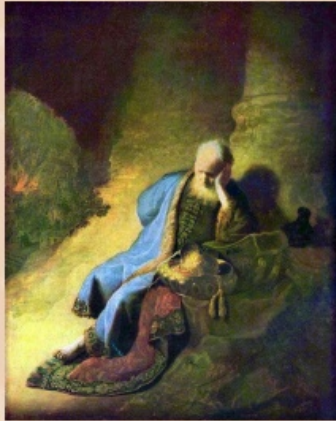
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KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR DESTROYED JERUSALEM King Zedekiah blinded, family members killed. 586 BC



“The Prophet Jeremiah Mourning over the Destruction of Jerusalem” is among the early works of Rembrandt in which his *leitmotif* of conceptual structure was a single or totally dominant figure that is totally bound up in the course of an historical event. Rembrandt masterfully turns an individual person, their expressions and posture, into a history painting.

Alex Tang went to Amsterdam in 2006 which is the 400 year anniversary of Rembrandt's birth. Alex saw this painting of the prophet Jeremiah in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam - Museum for Art and History and was immediately captivated.

Seated at the base of a large column, Jeremias mourns the destruction of Jerusalem. It was an event he had prophesied. The light falls almost exclusively on the old man and his immediate surroundings.

Remember we learned that In 586 BC King Nebuchadnazzar was used by God to take Judah into captivity in Babylon. We learned that the leadership of Judah, King Jehoiakim, did everything evil in the sight of the Lord. His father had been the 'good King Josiah' so together we learned the principal that "God has no Grandchildren" and you "reap what you sow". Each person is on their own spiritual journey and has a very personal relationship with God and their own personal path. I asked each of you to realize that you have a destiny with meeting God. Have you put your faith and trust in Jesus and are you listening to the Holy Spirit to bring you in line with God's will for your life.

Then we met, Daniel, Hannaniah, Azariah, and Mishael whom Nebuchadnazzar had taken into captivity. They were the sons of nobles and kings and we learned that some of them were even descendents of the great King David.



When I last taught 2 weeks ago we saw that Nebuchadnezzar put them into a 3 year brainwashing program where he tried to change their identities. We learned that identity is a basic need in the heart of every human being. These boys parent's gave them names that showed the faith that these parents had in YHWH. They were named Yahweh is my Judge, God is my Favor, Who is Like God?, and God is my help. Nebuchadnezzar called the Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. God's people continue to be blinded to their real identities and few Christians even know their real names.

We learned that we can only have peace and joy when we receive our identities in Christ. All of us have a need to fit in to the group and that is what I'm talking about with identity. We have learned that our identity does not come from others, but from God who has made us in His image and who has made us His children as adopted sons and daughters.

We then saw the King try to change their identities by having them eat His choice food and wine. They were not able to eat His food and drink His wine because it no doubt violated the Kosher laws by which they were commanded to live in Moses' law. When the King's orders violated God's Word they had to make their stand.



Daniel Refusing the King's Meat and Wine, by Del Parson, © 1963 IRI

I think it is important to note that they were civil in their disobedience. They didn't make a big fuss out of things' they just quietly reasoned that they had to do things God's way. Today we will see that Believers in Babylon who operate in a sphere of Faith and not Fear will experience Favor and not Failure.

We will see that God worked a miracle. After refusing the King's food and wine for a period of 10 days, they looked healthy. They looked GOOD. They had prospered.



I want to dwell for a moment in the text. I think it's interesting that the text tells us that they "reasoned" with the King's men. You know, a lot of times we get the idea that as Christians we need to go around purposely offending people. But the text tells us they didn't operate like that. The text reminds us that we often need to just know God's will and do it and not spend a lot of time trying to get the whole world to understand why we behave like we behave. When God called me to lead His people at Union Grove I could almost hear the snickering in some corners. I decided that I would rather do what God tells me to do than to try to live up to the expectation of others, especially those that don't even know the Lord.

I think another little teaching at this point is to remember that these guys made their decision for God, for righteousness, for obedience BEFORE they ever got to Babylon. Each of us should make solid decisions before we meet the trials of life. I remember as a young man remembering my vows of faithfulness in marriage way prior to facing the temptations I met while on the road in my career. I want to encourage each of you to make solid decisions concerning the will of God today because that way there will be less negotiating and arguing with yourself when you find yourself in the midst of temptation and trials.

"Wherewithal shall a young man keep his way pure? They word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." Psalm 119:11

Verse 17 then tells us, "As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of literature and wisdom*; Daniel even understood all *kinds of visions and dreams*."

Notice what is going on. God has not spared them from difficulty and trials, but He gives them divine knowledge and divine wisdom. **James 1: 2** My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, **3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. **4** But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. **5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

WOW. God can actually give us knowledge beyond our learning and wisdom beyond our years. So, what is knowledge? Well, knowledge is the facts we learn about a certain subject, but wisdom is the mental and emotional capacity to know how to use what we have learned. I am fond of telling folks that knowledge is knowing that a tomato is actually a fruit. Wisdom is realizing that it is not a good thing to put tomatoes in a fruit salad.

Well, King Nebuchadnezzar examined these youths and he found none like them. Church, this is a model of how God can use each of us in these days of Daniel. Remember that I told you each that we are no longer in the Days of David, but we now find ourselves in the Days of Daniel. We may no longer have the political power in this society, but we can and will prosper within it. Part of how we will prosper is that we will have influence in ways we've never had influence before.

Let me be careful in explaining that by "prospering" I do not mean that we will avoid hardship or that the world's riches will come to us. There are even churches that tell God they expect their bank accounts to be full and their cars to be new and all other such nonsense. Perhaps some of you have seen these silly little notes called memes that people put on their facebook accounts to some how claim riches.

What is your "Lucky Prosperity name?"

Take the first letter of your first

A - Abundant	B - Prosperous	C - Fortunate	D - Luxurious
E - Opulent	F - Plenty	G - Successful	H - Thriving
I - Wealthy	J - Affluent	K - Bountiful	L - Profitable
M - Blessed	N - Grateful	O - Bonus	P - Copious
Q - Myriad	R - Plethora	S - Cheery	T - Relaxed
U - Peaceful	V - Satisfied	W - Many	X - Profuse
Y - Surfeit	Z - Happy		



The month you were born

JAN - Profit	FEB - Benefit
MAR - Perks	APR - Satisfaction
MAY - Profusion	JUN - Income
JUL - Money	AUG - Blessing
SEP - Success	OCT - Opulence
NOV - Cornucopia	DEC - Relaxation



Shut Up I'm Still Talking

facebook.com/ShutUpImStillTalking

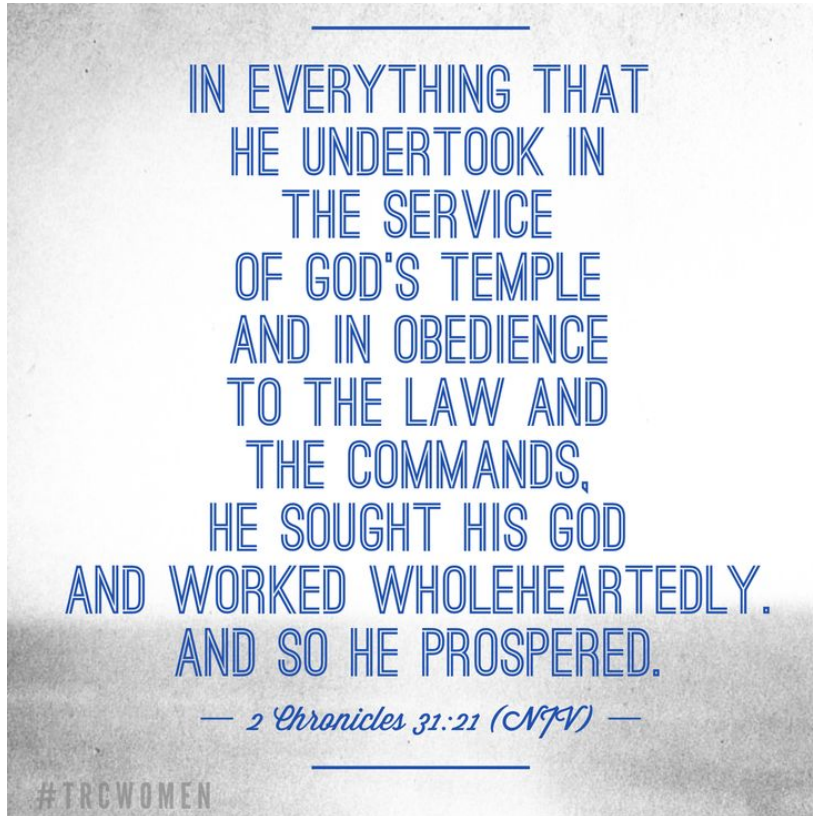
I guess looking at this my name mysteriously really means that "Plenty Perks" are coming my way.

Prosperity is a way of living and thinking. Also, poverty is a way of living and thinking. Before I made my fortune I remember telling Sandy that inside of me I always felt prosperous. Even when I had nothing, I suppose I learned to count my blessings and desire a close relationship with God above all other blessings. When I realized just how much God provided for me I couldn't help but feel prosperous. God saw fit to use my intellect and emotions and He helped my wife and I to work hard and set up some businesses the fruit of which still maintain us even today.

The way to prosper is to fall in love with the Lord and to work well at what he puts into your hands and be grateful. Making money is a wonderful endeavor if it doesn't consume you. I told my kids as they were growing up, "Money doesn't solve all of life's problems, but it can sure solve a lot of them." The key however is to start with an overwhelming sense of gratitude to love God and to want to do EVERYTHING as best you can for His honor and glory.

When I was a little boy my dad had a little plaque on his desk in his medical office. After he died, I gave it to Scott Armstrong and It says,

In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered. 2 Chronicles 31:21



You know, a lot of times we pray for things that we think we want and God just knows so much better what we need.

**I thank God for
protecting me
from what I
thought I
wanted
and blessing me
with what I
didn't know I
needed.**

What do we learn from all of this today? How can I wrap this up? We learn that we cannot and will not ever understand why we go through these trials here on earth. Last week you heard the testimony of a father who lost his young son to cancer. Today you've watched as 4 young men who had done nothing to deserve it, were taken into captivity, taken from their families and subjected to the abuses of a foreign king.

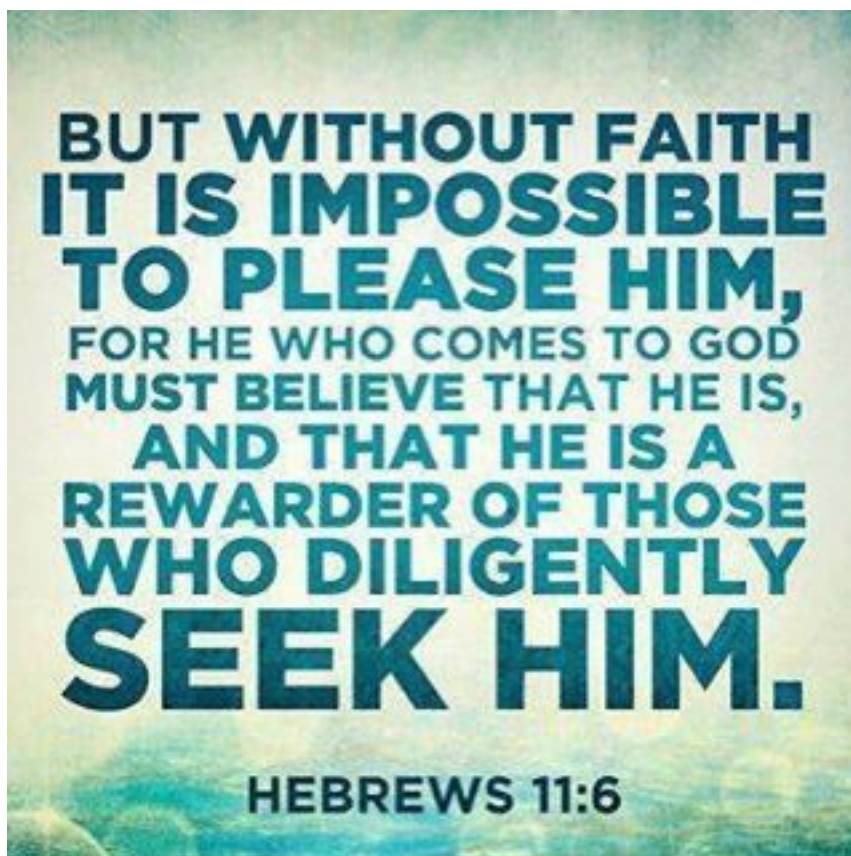
We learn that we do have options in how we will respond when hardships and setbacks come our way. I spoke to one member in this room who told me that when faced with a similar situation he truly contemplated ending it all, but his children gave him a reason for living. I noted that those children were a little flicker of grace that kept him alive.

The options are actually fairly clear: On the negative side we 1) either go home and do ourselves in or we live a life of bitterness and despair in trying to figure out how something so bad could have happened to us. The other way to deal with it, is to say in faith, "God. I do not understand this. I do not like this. But Lord I choose to believe that you have a plan and a purpose for all of this in my life and in the life of those that I love." God I choose to believe that You are conforming me into the very image of Jesus that you desire for me. Lord, forgive me for the fears that I have had, and Lord help me to have the faith to trust in you."

Verse 21 is one of the most instructive verses in the Bible. It tells us that Daniel "continued" until the first year of Cyrus the King. What does this mean? This last verse tells us to "keep on keeping on". Why do I say this? Well this verse tells us that Daniel continued until the reign of King Cyrus. It means that Daniel survived all of the turnovers in power in Babylon for the entire 70 years that Israel was in captivity. Because you see, Cyrus lived and came to power almost 70 years after these Hebrew children were taken into captivity.

You see, Daniel survived and prospered throughout the entire Neo-Babylonian exile.

This chapter of the Bible tells us that those who remain faithful in hardship will reap divine blessing. The world works on us trying to pressure us into compromising our faith. But Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael remind us that our only solid foundation is having our identity in Christ. If we live in obedience to His Word we have the ability to live our lives in FAITH and not FEAR. We are meant to have FAVOR and not FAILURE.



Hardship comes or will come to each believer in this room. We are taught that we will indeed prosper, but to prosper really means to be conformed into the image of Christ. It does not mean we will have a life without hardship. We know from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans that "All things work together for good for those who love God for those who are called according to His purpose. But WHY? "**29** For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."

Today we get to see one of those times when things sort of turned out like we hope that they will.

INVITATION:

To Accept Christ

To take the next step of obedience in your life