

Trusting God When Evil Abounds

DARRELL DELANEY

I love superhero movies. As a kid, I can remember running around the house with a towel clothes-pinned to my neck, pretending to be Superman. I loved Superman because of his strength and speed. We often look at Superman and are glad when he shows up in the movies, because he prevents imminent danger. The difference between God and Superman is that God does not prevent danger always. He sometimes works in the midst of danger. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we will see how God works in the midst of danger in the book of Daniel, and hopefully the lessons will inspire us to continue to put our faith and trust in the God who delivers. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in part five of our six-part series on the book of Daniel, and we have been talking about the sovereignty of God—he is sovereign over all things, even in less than ideal circumstances; because Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, have found themselves in exile because of the disobedience of Israel, and God is still finding a way to give them the ability to thrive and to survive in that unfortunate circumstance.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We have seen so far in this series, and in this program we are going to come right to the halfway point in the book of Daniel, that God again and again has delivered these four men in exile, because they again and again get tested...put in situations in which they have a choice: compromise their devotion to and their faithfulness to the God of Israel and go along with what the Babylonian kings wanted, or stay true and face the consequences; and again and again, of course, they stay true and face the consequences; and again and again, God delivers them from a death decree, from a fiery furnace, from all kinds of ways in which things could have gone badly; but again and again, God reveals the Babylonian kings only think they are in charge; God really is.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's true, Scott; and so, we see a motif between the first six chapters, where there is a narrative and a challenge that has to do with their faith, and then there is a dream or an interpretation of a dream that needs to happen with a king. So, the first episode was when we talked about how God has brought Daniel into this situation. He wouldn't compromise during the food and things like that; and in the second episode we did, Chapters 2 and 4, which are about dreams of Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel happened to interpret for him...to have help him explain and understand what is going on; and then we talked about how the three Hebrew boys were thrown into the fiery furnace because they would not compromise their faith; and so, we see this motif of story, dream; story, dream; and then we have another story. Today in this episode, we are going into Chapter 6.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Another thing we have noticed, and we are actually going to see it by the time we get to the end of this episode, is that God keeps coming through, and the Babylonian kings, first Nebuchadnezzar, then his son

Belshazzar, and now we are going to get to another king...a sort of mysterious figure we will talk about in a second, Darius the Mede...again and again, God comes through, and the kings, at the ends of these chapters, say: Wow; the God of Israel is great! We all should worship him! And then, it is like, you know, the next chapter starts and that never happened; and we kind of go right back. So, the Babylonian kings were, shall we say, slow learners apparently. They didn't seem to remember this stuff for long.

We saw only one chapter, really, principally about Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son. Nebuchadnezzar dies at some point; Belshazzar takes over, and then we had that story about the hand writing on the wall...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And God casts rather swift judgment. We don't know how long Belshazzar reigned, but it doesn't look like it was too long; and when Daniel was asked to interpret that handwriting on the wall from Daniel Chapter 5, Daniel says: Oh, this says you're done...you're done! And that night, he was done. He died; and then he gets replaced by somebody oddly enough identified by their age: 62-year-old Darius...or Darius...the Mede; and he is a mysterious figure, Darrell, because outside of the Bible, there is not much of a historical record of him.

DARRELL DELANEY

This is actually the only place he is mentioned in the scripture. So, some scholars think, is he the one that is going to be used as God's instrument? Is he connected to King Cyrus later on in the book of Isaiah, or is he related to other folks?

I just wanted to go back into the scripture that his name actually picks up in Chapter 2, and it picks up in verse 36, and it says: This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. ³⁷Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ³⁸in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. ³⁹After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. ⁴⁰Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. ⁴¹Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. ⁴²As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

So, the reason why we are reading this passage, Scott, is because the silver part of the interpretation of the dream, some people, scholars included, mention this to be Darius. He is the one who is the silver part of the armor of the person who is interpreted as the figure in the dream; and we see right now that Daniel's dream is actually being interpreted in his lifetime, and that change of power is happening.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Things are going keep getting weaker, Daniel says, there in Chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar, you are strong; you are the head of gold, yes; but it is going to keep getting a little bit weaker. We get silver, which is a little weaker than gold; and bronze, which is a little weaker than silver; and then we get down to the bottom, which is partly iron, partly clay; and yet, the iron is going to smash the clay and everything else, too, by the way. So, it was a preview that Babylon was not going to be forever. Belshazzar, and now Darius the Mede, are not going to be as strong as Nebuchadnezzar; and ultimately, Babylon is going to go down. Actually, in the final episode of this series, we are going to look a little more directly at some of that in some dreams Daniel will eventually have; but in this dream of Nebuchadnezzar, we foresee the rise of this Darius the Mede. He is not going to be super, super strong...he is not going to be a believer in the true, living God. Of course, as we said, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, if they believed in God, it didn't last; but this Darius is also going to do, though, what Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar also did, and that is fancy himself as the master of the universe. He is going to fancy himself as being the strongest of the strong; and we are going to see that in the

main story we are going to look at in this episode. It is probably the most famous story in the book of Daniel. We are going to get to it in just a moment, so stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and we are going to go now to Daniel Chapter 6, and let's hear these words: It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, ²with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. ³Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. ⁵Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we can see here, Scott, that God still has his hand on Daniel. I love that passage part where you said that he had "exceptional qualities". In the King James Version, it says he has an "excellent spirit", and God put that spirit in him to be the administrator that made Darius so pleased that he would exalt him above all these other satraps and these other people. So, God is still excelling Daniel and giving him the ability to thrive in this exile situation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; yes, he is not charmed, he is blessed, right? I mean, he is blessed by God. God has given Daniel talents and gifts and abilities; and Daniel is diligent in using them; as we are all called to do. I mean, all of us...it doesn't matter whether we are a doctor, a lawyer, a school bus driver, an auto mechanic, a stay-at-home mom or dad; the gifts we have been given to do with the work we do, we do them to the best of our abilities. Daniel did that; and if you are a corrupt person yourself, as some of these administrators and satraps clearly are...if you are somebody who cuts corners, as we suspect some of these people did...nothing is more annoying than somebody who is just clean, who is just incorruptible. I mean, Daniel was annoyingly good. So, they said: Look, look, look... You know, it reminds me of a movie I saw a while back, where somebody gets a new job and he starts whipping through his assignments really, really quickly; and one of his coworkers says: Will you slow down. You are going to make the rest of us look bad! You know, I mean, take it easy; go slower! Don't be so good. They don't want to be compared to Daniel. So, rather than try to do what they ought to do, and say: Hey, let's aspire to be as good as Daniel, they say: Well, let's see if we can bring Daniel down to our level; and they cannot do it!

DARRELL DELANEY

They cannot do it because of his heart. He will not compromise his integrity. God has given him an excellent spirit. He wants to do things in an excellent way; and whenever you are in a situation where you are working or you are serving the Lord, you want to do it to the best of your ability with all your heart, like scripture tells us to do, to the glory of God; and whenever you do that, you are going to shine your light. The Lord says... Actually, in Matthew 5, it says that we are supposed to let our light shine so that people will see our good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven; and there will be people around you, unfortunately, who see you shining that light a little too brightly and they are going to try to get you to compromise it. The only issue they could find with Daniel was with his God, so they decided to create a little mess...a little conspiracy...that involved the king, to see if they could get Daniel removed.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We cannot trip him up based on his job performance; we cannot trip him up based on his commitment to excellence; so, we will have to find a different way to trip him up or make him look tripped up to the king. You know, it sort of reminds me of in the New Testament, I think it is in 1 Peter, Peter says to the believers: 2:12 paraphrased You know, live such excellent lives that even if people want to criticize you as a Christian, they won't be able to do it. Be that way. Daniel was that way. So, what do you do? Well, you trip him up on his highest commitment.

Now we are going to go a little bit farther into this sixth chapter, and we go here now, Darrell, to verse 6.

DARRELL DELANEY

So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: "May King Darius live forever!"⁷ The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den.⁸ Now, your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, if you are someone like me who always likes to know the origin of common phrases, the laws of the Medes and the Persians, it comes here, Daniel 6, right? Anytime you want to say something, you know, well, it is not the law of the Medes and the Persians, but... Where does that come from? Here: Daniel 6. So, what do they do? They cannot get Daniel tripped up any other way, so they trip him up on his own religious faith. They know Daniel won't pray to Darius. He wouldn't pray to Belshazzar; he wouldn't pray to Nebuchadnezzar. They know Daniel will disagree with this, so they appeal to the king's vanity: Hey, issue a decree that people can only pray to you. Ooh, cool; I like that, Darius says; I like that. So, of course he issues a decree, not for a minute thinking that there is a plan to get at somebody he really likes, Daniel.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, and so, I think also it is important to note that sometimes as Christians we get in trouble because of our faith and not because we have done anything else...anything out of the ordinary; and Jesus promised that because they persecuted him, that we would be persecuted as believers as well; and we see Daniel unwilling to compromise his faith. He actually opens his window so that they could see him praying three times a day; and it is not because he is being prideful or being boastful, but I think it echoes Romans 1:16, where Paul says: I am not ashamed of the Gospel. Because he is not ashamed of his worship with God, and that is why he won't compromise.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; so, the king, by having his vanity appealed to, issues a decree that he doesn't recognize could have wider ramifications; and soon enough, he finds out exactly what was behind it after all. So, we move a little farther into Daniel 6*, and these satraps and others go to Darius and say: Hey, by the way, didn't you issue a decree that nobody could pray to anybody by you? Yeah. Well, verse 13: "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day."¹⁴ When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.¹⁵ paraphrased Then the group went back and said, "Remember your decree...the laws of the Medes and the Persians again..."¹⁶ So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"¹⁷ A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the lions' den and the king sealed it with his own signet ring...so that Daniel's situation might not be changed.

Then we are told the king returned to his palace, but he couldn't eat or sleep all night. Darius was so impressed with Daniel that it upset him terribly that he got tricked into this thing, but he couldn't get out of it, right? He couldn't just repeal his decree without losing face, as we say; and so, he is forced to throw Daniel into the lions' den; but he is almost weeping as he does it. He doesn't want Daniel to die, but he has been so

manipulated, and he is, at the end of the day, so weak, that he just doesn't do anything about it.

DARRELL DELANEY

And there is nothing he can do about it because once the decree...it is said three times in this chapter...once the decree is said, it cannot be changed; and so, he is actually tied up in his own words and his own decree; and if the story ended here, it would be a pretty hopeless story about a guy who tried to stand up for what was right, and then put to death when the sentence came down. I am so glad that that is not the end of the story; and we will see when we close this program how powerful God can deliver and speak into a situation; and we also will see that this God is still in control, even though the situation looks dire. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this fifth episode of our six-part series on the Old Testament book of Daniel; and we are in what proves to be...as we will see in the final program of this series, Darrell...in what proves to be the final narrative chapter: Daniel 6. We are in the well-known story, Daniel and the lions' den; and we have seen, Darrell, that the king got manipulated into having it go this way.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; unfortunately, because the king has these decrees and put his signet ring on certain rules, they cannot be changed, not even by him. These administrators, who were not fond of Daniel, and probably upset because he was doing an excellent job, and they wanted to actually have him removed. So, they came up with this conspiracy to have him get trapped up in the only thing they could get him trapped up in, which was his belief in his God; and so, they set up this whole plan...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

And the king is locked into this situation where even though Daniel is doing a great job; he has top marks; he does stellar reviews annually; he is in a situation where, you know, unfortunately, his words cannot be changed when the penalty comes down.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

So now, we are in this situation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Two things to observe here, Darrell, on the nature of evil. Many of us have encountered this in our own lives, right? Look what happens here. Daniel gets punished by these manipulative advisers and governors and satraps. He gets punished because of his goodness. He was so good; they couldn't figure out any other way to get rid of him other than to be evil themselves. So, his goodness becomes a liability; and then, what is the other thing? How did they manage to trip him up? By exploiting something else good about Daniel; that was his faith in God. So, he gets in trouble with them because of what is most excellent about him, and they use his faith against him; and boy, Darrell, doesn't that just...talk about how the evil one works. Trying to take our strengths and turn them into liabilities and weaknesses; trying to take our faith and use it against us. That speaks of the nature of evil on so many different levels.

DARRELL DELANEY

What I love about God is that because he is the just one, and because he is the true king that is never going to be dethroned, he is the one who is the character who is behind the scenes in all this; he is the main character

of the book of Daniel, and we trust in the continual reminder of his sovereignty, that he is actually in control of the events that are happening, not only in Daniel's life...not only in the three Hebrew friends' lives, but in our lives as well. So, even though Daniel is put in the situation where he is actually put in the lions' den, and they think he is not going to make it. This is a death penalty—this is a death sentence; but God is sovereign; and therefore, he is intervening into this situation, and we will see that in this passage.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Eventually the prophet Isaiah will predict a day when the lion will lie down with the lamb, but that ain't today. Lions and human beings don't lie down next to each other in a lions' den. They eat the human being. We saw that Darius loves Daniel, and he was so upset that he was forced to throw him into the lions' den that he couldn't sleep the whole night. He tossed and turned, or maybe he didn't even try to go to bed; and so, no surprise, here we are, Daniel 6:19:

At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. ²⁰When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" ²¹Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! ²²My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty." ²³The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den.

So, I am sure the king had some anxious moments there: Daniel? Uh, are you alive? And he was. Again, another amazing, divine rescue; one of several that we have seen in this book.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, it was a beautiful rescue that shows that God is in control, not only of the fire in the fiery furnace with three Hebrew friends in the earlier chapters, but also here with the lions. They were not able to devour Daniel because God had intervened into that situation; and so, what is interesting is the fact that, not only is God vindicating and justifying his righteous servant here, Daniel, but he is also allowing the king to issue the punishment now to the people who planned this conspiracy in the first place. So, now the ones who conspired against him, these administrators, they are thrown into the lions' den and they get devoured immediately because that was the judgment that they received.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, kind of an unhappy end there, even though they... you cannot deny that those manipulative satraps and company had it coming. We are also told that their wives and children were thrown in. So, it is actually a tragic ending. Not for Daniel, but it is sort of a sad end of where the spiral of evil often goes.

As we come to the end of this last narrative in the book, we have a few things that we can point out as sort of summary observations. One is, God doesn't necessarily prevent obstacles in our lives, right? God didn't prevent these satraps and governors from manipulating the king, but God isn't undone by that kind of evil either.

DARRELL DELANEY

What I love is that we can literally zoom out from the book of Daniel and look at the entire testimony of the scriptures and see that God doesn't edit out all the problems; he doesn't edit out all the brokenness; he doesn't edit out all the challenges; but God somehow finds a way to intervene into human history and work in spite of the challenges. Even going back to the fall, you see our God is willing to say: Okay, Adam and Eve disobeyed. I have a plan for that. That plan of redemption that is going to work itself out. So, God is always in the midst of working on behalf of the believer, and in the midst of believer's challenges, even if they are not caused by the believer; and I love the fact that God can work, and that doesn't tie up his hands.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and another thing to note is that our faith is a precious gift of God. And even though, as we just said a little while ago, those manipulative governors and company, they tried to turn Daniel's faith into his weakness. They tried to turn Daniel's faith into a liability, but it didn't work. He kept the faith, and God in turn kept *his* faith to him; and we will just see how this story ends. It is not at all unusual how stories have

ended. Daniel 6:25, Darius wrote a decree:

²⁶“I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom (to honor) [people must fear] and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. ²⁷He rescues and saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.”

And if this were consistent with the other pattern we have seen; if there were another story about Darius, he would probably forget all about this; but again, this one is so powerful, even Darius issues what looks to me, Darrell, like a doxology.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, it looks like one; and this actually will be very important when we get into the final episode of this series because this is our God. He is our rescuer, and he is the one who deserves the glory, honor and praise. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we conclude our study of Daniel’s prayers and dreams and visions in Chapters 7 through 12.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Groundwork is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit reframeministries.org for more information and to find more resources to encourage your faith. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee.

***Correction:** In the audio of this episode, host Scott Hoezee misspeaks and says “Romans 6,” when he meant to say “Daniel 6.”

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