

# Persistent Faith in the Living God

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[ 0 : 00 ] The scripture reading comes from Daniel chapter 6. Please follow along on the screen, the bulletin, or your own Bible. Starting in verse 1, we read, It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom.

And over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him.

And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom.

But they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. Then these men said, We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel, unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.

Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, O King Darius, live forever. All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors, are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days except to you, O King, shall be cast into a den of lions.

[ 1 : 29 ] Now, O King, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed according to a law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.

Therefore, King Darius signed the document and injunction. When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open towards Jerusalem.

He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God.

Then they came near and said before the king concerning the injunction, O King, did you not sign an injunction that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O King, shall be cast into a den of lions?

The king answered and said, The thing stands fast according to a law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked. Then they answered and said before the king, Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O King, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.

[ 2 : 45 ] Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored until the sun went down to rescue him. Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, Know, O King, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.

Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into a den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you.

And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting. No diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him. Then at the break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions.

As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?

[ 4 : 02 ] Then Daniel said to the king, O king, live forever. My God sent his angel and shut the lion's mouth, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him.

And also before you, O king, I have done no harm. That the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions, they, their children, and their wives.

And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces. Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied to you.

I make a decree that in all my royal dominion, people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever.

[ 5 : 10 ] His kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues. He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth.

He who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. This is the word of God.

Amen. Great. Thank you, Irene. Good morning, everybody. It is good to see you again and good to see a couple of faces we haven't seen in a while.

It's great to be able to worship with you. And if you're online, good morning to you. Welcome as well. If you are new to Watermark and you don't know me, my name is Kevin, one of the leaders here, and it's great to be able to look at God's word together this morning.

Now, I'm not sure how many of you are runners. I, once upon a time, used to try and run. And when we first arrived in Hong Kong three and a half years ago or so, I had the bright idea.

[ 6 : 17 ] I thought, you know, I am young, I am ambitious, I am fit, and I'm going to run from HKU, somewhere here, up to the top of the peak, up the morning trail, and just, you know, gentle morning run.

Well, I tried it once or twice, and that was the end of that. And pretty soon, I realized the hills in Hong Kong meant that was the end of running altogether. But I'm not sure how many of you are like me, that every January comes around, and I decide, this is the year that I'm going to get fit.

This is the year I'm going to get healthy, right? And so, maybe it's not running, maybe cycling, or hiking is your thing, or swimming. Rhoda and I were talking about swimming a little earlier.

And we all tend to do the same stupid thing, right? We think that the laws of nature apply to everyone else, but not to ourselves. And so, what I tend to do every January, I think it's time to get fit, and I go for a run, and I think, look, I'm not going to get fit if I don't push myself.

So, you've got to push yourself a little bit. And so, when I start to get tired, I think, oh, you know, I can't stop now, that doesn't help anything. So, you push yourself a little further, and just a little further, and a little further, and eventually, you get to the point where you think, okay, this is about enough.

[ 7 : 36 ] And you figure, that's a good point to turn around and then make the trek home. Right? Does that ring a bell to anybody? And about halfway home, I figure, my legs are so dead, I cannot take another step.

Or, if I make it home, the next day, or the day after, two days later, I'm really feeling it. Does that ring a bell, or is it only me that does that? Okay, Patney as well, thank you.

Rhoda and I were talking about that. Rhoda went swimming this week, not swimming for a while, and decided to swim for an hour. And the next day, her arms were quite exhausted. The Bible says that the Christian life is actually like a race, in some ways.

And it's a race, that is not a sprint. It's a race that God calls us to run with endurance right to the end. The Christian life is not one in which we are hot for a couple of years, serve all over the place, burn ourselves out, and then don't participate in any running for the next year, until the next year your New Year's resolutions come.

Actually, the Bible says the Christian life is, it's those who, through steady and consistent faithfulness and endurance make it to the end.

[ 8 : 52 ] And the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, in the book of Philippians, look at how he writes this. He says this, I want to know Christ, and I want to know the power of His resurrection. In fact, I want to attain the resurrection.

And that means necessarily sharing in His sufferings. And then he says, so I press on with this race towards the goal for the prize, the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

He's saying, this race, this Christian walk that I'm on, it's like a race, and I want to push on. I'm not just here to be hot for a few good years. Actually, I'm going to keep on. It's a life of consistent endurance following Jesus to the end.

And then Paul makes this amazing little line. He says, those that are mature will think this way. And one of the things that Paul is saying here is that Christian maturity is not just a matter of length of time.

You can be a Christian for 30 or 40 years but still not be very spiritually mature. You can still be quite immature. Christian maturity is those that through consistency and faithful endurance press on towards the goal of knowing Jesus better and deeper.

[10:03] And that's actually a lot of what we're going to look at today in Daniel chapter 6. The passage that we're going to look at today, we're going to see that it's those that consistently trust in the living God.

That's an important phrase, the living God. Those who live for Him right to the end are those who pass through death into life. And that's what we're going to see in our passage today.

And so let's dive into Daniel chapter 6. And obviously it's a very famous passage about Daniel and the lion's den. A passage that many of us would have heard from childhood.

But let's dive in and see what's going on here. So look at the first few verses of me, of chapter 6, with me. There is a new king on the scene and his name is Darius.

Now, who is Darius? Well, Darius is the king of the Medo-Persian Empire. And what's happened here is, I don't know if you remember back in chapter 2, Chris was preaching a few weeks ago, and King Nebuchadnezzar has this dream.

[11:05] You remember the dream and there's this gold, or the statue, there's a golden head, a silver torso, bronze legs, etc., etc. Does that sound familiar? And what is the dream about?

The dream is about you, O king, are the head of gold, you are the Babylonian Empire, but your empire is not going to last. After you is going to come another empire, they're going to defeat you, and they will be the world's superpower.

And that's happening before our very eyes. The Babylonians have been wiped out, the Medo-Persians have conquered them, the year is 539 BC, and so now the Medo-Persians are the world's superpower, and Darius is the king who's on the throne.

Okay? And so on one hand, everything is different in the book of Daniel. It's a new king, new empire, new regime, a new way of governing the world in many ways.

Remember, the Babylonians are quite autocratic. The Medo-Persians are a bit more democratic in a way. Do you remember what Irene read to us? They're laws that cannot be revoked.

[12:08] So everything's new in some ways, but on the other hand, as we're going to see, actually nothing's new. Because everything that happens in chapter 6 is very similar to what happened under Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 3.

Out of jealousy, these leaders go to the king, they get this law that's passed, a law that says either you worship the king, or you're going to suffer some gruesome, torturous death.

Okay? And that's really important because one of the things that we're meant to see here is throughout the world, things change all the time, superficially, but actually many of the fundamental issues of life actually don't change that much.

On one hand, kingdoms come and go, empires come and go, leaders come and go, democratic parties come and go, many things change in life, but actually the fundamentals, the things that God says are important, actually don't really change all that much.

From age to age and generation to generation. And I remember finding this quite interesting when we moved from Cape Town, South Africa, to Hong Kong three and a half years ago. If you think about it, sleepy Africa, right?

[13:18] Fast-paced Hong Kong, worlds apart, like the very opposite extremes of culture and the way that things are done. And yet one of the things that struck me when we moved here is that in many ways the fundamental aspects of life actually don't change that much altogether.

In many ways, people in Africa and people in Hong Kong, can I say, we actually have got the same longings of our hearts. We've got the same insecurities. We've got the same fears.

We all want to be longed and appreciated and loved by those around us. Marriage and parenting are challenging. Whether you live in 21st century Hong Kong, 21st century Cape Town, or 1st century biblical times.

The longings of our hearts are actually very similar. And so that's what we see here. On one hand, everything's different, but actually on the other hand, not that much has changed altogether.

But the other thing that we see here in the book of Daniel, just as we get into chapter 6, is that by this stage, Daniel is an old man. And we mentioned this a few weeks ago, but Daniel's a really old man.

[ 14 : 28 ] He's not like Simon Wong old, okay? He's properly old, okay? Thanks, Simon. Daniel at this stage is kind of probably mid-80s.

He's been in Babylon 70 years. He got taken to Babylon as a teenager, maybe 15, 16 years old.

He's now lived, he's outlived the entire Babylonian empire 70 years.

He's on to the next empire. And so Daniel's now somewhere in his 80s. And often when we read the children's Bibles, we see these pictures of Daniel in the lion's den.

And he's this strapping young, you know, 25-year-old guy in the prime of his life. He's good looking.

But that's not the case. Daniel is an old man here. And one of the things that God wants us to see in this chapter is how Daniel has lived his entire life faithfully and consistently trusting in God.

And can I just say that I know that as a church, Watermark is generally quite a young church. And I love the fact that we've got so many amazing young people that are really powering it and doing so well.

[ 15 : 37 ] And that is so awesome. It's one of the things we love about our church. But the kingdom of God is not just for young people. And I know that in Hong Kong we've got this interesting dynamic.

There's some churches where until you're kind of mid-50s it seems like your voice doesn't really count. Right? You've got to like really be in the second half of your life until you've got any contribution in the church.

But sometimes in the English church it can feel like once you're over 40 you're kind of past your prime and it's just a young person's church. Does that make any sense? Did anybody feel that?

Okay, are you allowed to nod? One of the things Daniel's going to show us is that actually the kingdom of God we need both young fiery people that are powering for God but we actually also need men and women that have faithfully and consistently served God and given their lives to God for decades after decade after decade.

And so just like Moses who was 80 years old when he went back to Egypt and delivered God's people out of Egypt and just like Caleb who at 85 years old still had vision and passion to advance God's kingdom Daniel's going to show us that one of the marks of a mature Christian is someone who can consistently and faithfully decade after decade give their life to the things of God.

[ 16 : 57 ] Okay, so that's by way of introduction. So let's look what happens here. So as Irene read to us Darius is the new king in town and he chooses these 120 satraps these are like governors in a sense to rule the new empire that he has taken over to rule what was the Babylonian empire and he installs these three men that are kind of the leaders who these 120 men are accountable to and Daniel soon emerges as the leader of the three so he really is kind of the top of the pile and this is all good and well except that office politics soon comes into play and the others are jealous because Daniel is not a Babylonian he's not a Medo-Persian he's a foreigner and he shouldn't be at the top of the pile and so office politics kicks into place and these guys want to try to take him down but the problem is nothing will stick to Daniel he's a man of integrity and faithfulness there's no corruption nothing will stick to him and so the one thing they realize is that he's faithful to his God and so they come up with a plan of how they can get him taken out they've got to get a law passed that will pretty much make it illegal for Daniel to serve Yahweh and so that's what happens they go to Darius and they get Darius to sign this law which is no one can pray or worship to anyone other than Darius the king and otherwise they must face a certain death and Darius like Nebuchadnezzar before him thinks this is a good idea he signs the law into place and that means that

Daniel is going to be in trouble and so look at what Daniel does look at verse 10 what is Daniel going to do now that a law has been passed that makes it illegal to pray to God and if he even tries to do that he's going to be fed to the lions what is the first thing that Daniel should do well let's look at verse 10 together when Daniel knew that the document had been signed he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open towards Jerusalem he got down on his knees

three times a day and he prayed and he gave thanks to his God as he had done previously or as another translation says as was his customs since his earliest days friends is that not remarkable just think about it when when anxiety and stress come our way when the pressure is on when your career is on the line or your reputation is on the line never mind your life is on the line how do we respond well look at what Daniel does he gets on his knees and he prays

Daniel doesn't launch a public protest he doesn't protest his innocence he doesn't declare this is unjust this is not the way it should work Daniel doesn't even go and petition Darius the king who does he bring his petition before it's not king Darius it's Christ the king of kings Daniel gets on his knees and he prays Daniel knows the one who holds his life in his hands and it's before him that he brings his petition and friends doesn't that remind us of king Jesus Jesus right remember he's it's the night before he is going to go to the cross he's just had a last supper as Simon reminded us and he knows that Judas has betrayed him Judas leaves the dinner early to go and betray him Jesus knows what's coming his way the next day he's going to be crucified and what does Jesus do he goes deep into the garden of Gethsemane and he gets on his knees and he prays but notice here that

Daniel is not running to God freaking out he's not suddenly running to God saying God I need you I'm in a corner I've tried everything I don't know where to turn God you're my last resort because notice what the scripture says Daniel got on his knees and prayed three times a day as was his custom since his earliest days in other words the consistent pattern of his life is that through thick and thin when Daniel is promoted to the highest ranks of the land or Daniel's facing the death penalty the consistent pattern of his life is to become a man of prayer Daniel's not running to God as a last resort because he's exhausted every other option he runs to God as prayer as a matter of pattern because he knows God is God and God is faithful and sovereign friends no Christian and therefore no church is greater than its prayer life maybe you can ask us what is our prayer life like we've mentioned this before but I want to just read to us from the book of Acts what the early church's prayer life was like this is from a book by

John Onwanitra I think is how you say his name his book on prayer listen to how he catalogues the book of Acts he says Acts chapter 1 they prayed before choosing leaders Acts chapter 2 the Christians are gathered together in prayer when the Holy Spirit comes upon them at Pentecost Acts chapter 2 verse 42 says they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to prayer Acts chapter 3 we see that Peter and John go to the temple daily at the hour of prayer Acts chapter 4 the apostles are persecuted and facing opposition and what do they do they turn to God in prayer in Acts chapter 6 before they choose deacon leaders they pray about and ask God to lead and guide them but the reason they choose leaders is that the apostles can free up time to be devoted to preaching and to prayer in Acts chapter 7 Stephen the first martyr prays for the forgiveness of those who are killing him in Acts chapter 8 Peter and John pray with the saints in Samaria that they might be filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 9

[ 23 : 16 ] Peter prays and sees a woman rise from the dead in Acts chapter 10 Peter is daily going about his rhythm of prayer when God visits him challenges his hypocrisy and his racism against the Gentiles and starts the mission to the Gentiles in Acts chapter 12 Peter is in prison for preaching and the church gathers to pray and he is miraculously released from prison in Acts chapter 13 the church fasts and prays together to multiply the work and appoint new leaders in Acts chapter 14 after prayer and fasting Paul and Barnabas are sent out to missionaries to new lands and they appoint elders in the churches where they have gathered and we could go on and on and on Acts chapter 14 chapter 16 chapter 20 the early church if there is one thing that marked them there were people who knew how to pray friends if you are a Christian this morning what is your prayer life like?

three weeks ago we made the point that if you are a Christian if you are going to serve God faithfully all of your days you are going to face the fire it is part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus opposition is going to come your way what is going to keep us consistent what is going to keep us faithful all of our days what is going to keep us enduring to the end one of the reasons why Daniel is a man that can stand up to Nebuchadnezzar and Darius both in the highs of his life and lows of his life is he a man who knows how to pray and look at verse 16 look at Darius his own testimony about Daniel he says here in verse 16 may your God whom you serve continually deliver you again verse 20 O Daniel servant of the living God has your God whom you serve continually been able to deliver you from the lions if there's one thing that the new king knows about Daniel it's

this here is a man who has consistently and continually served his God and so maybe I can just the application for those of us that are in our 20s or early 30s if you're going to still be serving God faithfully in your 50s and your 60s and your 70s and your 80s and God willing in your 90s if you're going to be someone that consistently gives yourself to God can I urge you to be those that know what it means to be a man or woman of prayer friends we said it earlier the Christian life is a race but it's not a sprint and it's easy in your 20s and your 30s to be involved in church stuff and going to courses and having fun with your church friends and stuff but when the pressure of life comes you throw in a couple of babies throw in a demanding job throw in a boss that grills you right Chris you know a bit about that at the moment when the pressure of life comes we can find that we can go weeks with never getting into God's word never getting into prayer and friends if Sunday morning is the only time that we ever pray or get into God's word when the storms of life come our spiritual life will not survive

Daniel's a great example of what it means to be a man that's consistently serving God but notice something else about his prayer here I don't know if you saw this in verse 10 this really blew me away I never known this before until this week look at what he says here when Daniel knew that the document had been signed he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open towards Jerusalem he got down on his knees three times and he prayed and what did he do gave thanks to God he gave thanks to God as was his custom in this moment when due to the jealousy of his colleagues the king has signed an edict which not only goes against his faith but essentially says Daniel you're going to the lion's den today or tomorrow Daniel prays this prayer of gratitude and thankfulness to God and it's quite amazing how often the New Testament says that one of the keys to the Christian life to the consistent

Christian life is actually to live a life of gratitude and thankfulness to God even in the midst of storms listen to Thessalonians 1 rejoice always pray continually give thanks to God in all circumstances Philippians says rejoice in the Lord I'll say it again rejoice do not be anxious about anything but in every situation with prayer and petition and thanksgiving present your request before God your Father and so again and again the Bible tells us that one of the marks of Christian maturity is to know how to recognize the sovereignty of God and to be able to be thankful and gratitude to God even in the midst of the storms of life now why is that important well cultivating gratitude in other words fighting of discontentment is actually a spiritual discipline which is vital to spiritual vitality friends it's so easy to look around at others and say why is my life so hard why do they have it so easy it's so easy to compare our lives to those around us and to feel that somehow

[ 28 : 48 ] I've been hard but done by it's so easy to wallow in discontentment but friends if there's one person who maybe could have felt sorry for himself Daniel after serving God faithfully for 70 years serving Nebuchadnezzar serving Babylon now serving Darius what does he get for it all he gets thrown in the lion's den if there's one man that can feel sorry for himself I put it to us it's maybe Daniel and what does he do Father I'm so thankful for your faithfulness God thank you that you're a good God thank you that I can trust you in the circumstance friends that's amazing it's amazing bitterness and discontentment is like a virus that will suck the life out of your walk with Jesus and in the Christian life this race of endurance one of the spiritual disciplines which will get us over the line is cultivating a heart of gratitude and thankfulness and so we know what happens here

Daniel's conspirators burst into the room he's on his knees he's busy praying not to Darius but to Jesus or to Yahweh and that means that Daniel needs to face the lions right and so the story goes they march him off to Darius and they say Darius this man is not praying to you he's praying to Yahweh and he must die and Darius is actually very upset about this he doesn't want Daniel to die he likes Daniel and so he tries all sorts of things to pull strings to organize things but all to no avail the law must stand the Medo-Persian law was that once the law had been signed it could not be revoked Daniel must go to the lion den and so he does and so Darius and the guard they march him off to the lion's den and Daniel's thrown inside and we know the story miraculously for some reason that night the lions are not hungry Daniel says

God sent an angel to close their mouths and Daniel survives the night in the lion's den it's amazing that actually the story doesn't recall what his life what his night was like in the lion's den all we know is that Darius had a fretful night he couldn't sleep he couldn't eat things are not going well for him but Daniel we don't know too much about it but the one thing we know is the next morning Daniel is still alive and no one can quite believe it and Darius knows what this means what this means is that not only is Daniel alive and living but so is his God look at verse 26 with me Darius makes this

decreed I make a decree that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel for he is the living God that's the point he is the living God enduring forever his kingdom shall never be destroyed his dominion shall stand to the end he delivers and rescues he works signs and wonders in heaven above on earth below he who has saved

Daniel from the power of the lions now friends one of the things that I think we are meant to see here in this passage is in many ways Daniel is a picture or a prototype of the life of Jesus in many ways the life of Daniel or the chapter of Daniel reflects the life of Jesus did you notice how many connections there were between Daniel and Jesus both Daniel and Jesus are betrayed by the jealousy of their peers both Daniel and Jesus are sent to their death by a weak and manipulated king in the case of Jesus it's Pontius Pilate in the case of Daniel it's King Darius both Pilate and Darius actually didn't want to send them to death and wanted to find ways to set them free John 20 tells us but both of them are manipulated by weak and manipulated kings and did you notice I think it's verse 17 the reference to the stone being rolled over the tomb over the grave and how the king seals it with his signatory that's what Matthew 27 tells us happens to Jesus and of course both Daniel and Jesus return to the grave vindicating their claim that their God is alive and real but of course there are great differences as well

Daniel's traumatic ordeal meant that he would potentially suffer and die Jesus actually did suffer and die and while Daniel faced the wrath of the lions and the wrath of the law of the Medo-Persians Jesus faced the wrath of God Almighty and friends of course the greatest difference is that while Daniel went to the grave because of the jealousy of his enemies Jesus went to the cross because of his great love for his enemies remember John chapter 20 John chapter 10 Jesus says nobody takes my life from me I lay it down of my own accord and what that means is that while the life of Daniel is meant to be a great encouragement to us we're not meant to stop at Daniel but we're meant to look through the life of Daniel to the faithfulness of Jesus we tend to look at the story of Daniel and think I need to be more courageous courage is a good thing but the point of the story of Daniel is not that it's those that are courageous that are saved in the end or those that have conviction or consistency that are saved in the end the point of the story of Daniel is that

[ 34 : 38 ] Daniel is saved by the mercy and the faithfulness of God I was reading a commentary this week that said the point of Daniel 6 is that kingdoms will come and go empires will come and go but the one thing that remains as steadfast and faithful is Daniel and I thought no that's not the point you got it wrong the point is the faithfulness of God not Daniel it's not Daniel's courage that saves him it's the mercy and the kindness of God that saves Daniel friends the thing that God wants us to see is that when we had no way of saving ourselves if we will humble ourselves and cast ourselves on his mercy God is able to do the impossible God is able to save us from a certain death from a judgment to come which of course is the gospel right the point of Daniel 6 is not that if you have courage and faithfulness God will deliver you from your problems just listen to the millions of martyrs that have died throughout the ages read the history books and you'll see that if you're faithful to God it does not mean that you will outlive your enemies or that your life will be rosy or that everything will be easy and convenient if you're faithful to

God that might be the reason why you die early no friends the point is not that Daniel managed to save himself but that Daniel was saved by God in fact that's exactly what Daniel says he says his God is the living God he has saved Daniel from the power of the lions verse 27 and I think that's the point of verse 14 I don't know if you we referenced it earlier verse 14 says this then the king was much distressed and he set his mind to deliver Daniel he labored until the sun went down trying to rescue him Darius doesn't want Daniel to die and so Darius does everything he can to try and save him but at all to no avail and I think the point there that God wants to make is that even if you are the most connected person in the world if you are the most powerful and the wealthiest person in the world your soul one of the things about living in a city like

Hong Kong in a big city if you are a connector you can make things happen right if you know who to connect if you can pull the right strings draw on favors you can make things happen Cape Town that doesn't really happen Cape Town everyone's sleepy okay but in Hong Kong you can make things happen but one of the points here is that even if you are the most powerful influential wealthy person in the world there are some things that you cannot make happen salvation is not given to those that are powerful or connected or able to make things happen salvation is given to those who trust the living God friends in the New Testament book of Hebrews and we are going to close with this the book of Hebrews is written to a bunch of Christians who are discouraged it's written to a

bunch of Jewish Christians in the city of Rome they said hey we're going to follow Jesus we're going to do this thing we're going to be consistent to the end but life is proved hard it's not always easy and they're wondering maybe this

Jesus thing is overrated and so some of them are wondering maybe we should give up on Jesus and so the rite of Hebrews writes them to encourage them don't give up on Jesus Jesus is faithful you can trust him and one of the things the rite of Hebrews does is in chapter 11 he writes about all these great men and women of faith in the Old Testament that were faithful to God and kept on going and he says let their life be an encouragement to you Abraham and Moses and etc etc and then he says time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Japhda and David and Samuel and all the prophets those who through faith conquered kingdoms enforced justice obtained promises stopped the mouths of lions that's Daniel quenched the power of fire escaped the edge of the sword those who were made strong in their weakness and became mighty in war and put foreign armies others suffered mocking and flogging chains and imprisonment they were stoned they were sawn in two they were killed with the sword you notice the reference to

Daniel there some stopped the mouths of lions so what he's saying he's saying there are all these great men and women of faith that have been faithful to God look at their lives as an encouragement to you but then he says he climaxes with this chapter 12 therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses he's talking about these men and women of faith let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us not looking to Daniel or David or Samson looking to Jesus the founder and the perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising its shame and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God what the rite of Hebrews is telling us here is that there are many men and women throughout the ages in the

[ 40 : 12 ] Old Testament and throughout church history who had great faith and faithfulness to God and look at me be more like me the role is that they are almost like on the sidelines of a running race and they are cheering us on they saying I know it's hard but keep on going Jesus is faithful look at us and remember our lives we weren't great we weren't amazing but Jesus is so faithful look to Jesus and as you look to Jesus you can keep on going the point of these men and women is that they are to help us not pointing to themselves they are like road signs on the road pointing past themselves to the faithfulness of Jesus to the true and better Daniel the one who really did die and really did rise again and so friends let us let Daniel's life be an encouragement to us but let's not look at Daniel and say I need to be more like Daniel that will only discourage you let's look at

Daniel and say God was so faithful and if I can hold on to Jesus like he held on to God God will be faithful to me too and so friends I want to encourage let us lay aside everything that holds us back from following Jesus let us run with endurance the race not just for a year or two not just in our twenties or our thirties but consistently and faithfully decade after decade let us look until our dying breath to Jesus the author and the perfecter of our faith the one who is the ground and the substance of our faith the one who is both the beginner and the finisher of our faith the one who went to the cross who rose again the one who is the living God let's look to him friends don't idolize Daniel's faithfulness but let Daniel point you beyond himself to the living God who truly is faithful so that you and I too can run with endurance the race that is set before us let's pray together

Ben do you want to come and we're going to respond in a time of worship but let me just pray for us Father God Lord Jesus Christ Holy Spirit God you're so abundantly faithful as we read the scripture we see these lives these great men and women people like David and Daniel women like Esther and Ruth who in the midst of great trial looked to you and you God saved and delivered them they passed from death to life and Christ we want to do the same we look to you this morning God I pray for those of us now that feel like we are in the clutches of death we feel like life is closing in on us God by your Holy Spirit won't you help us to look to you and to hold on to you God won't you help us to be those that live a life of consistency looking to you the living God God I pray for us as a church for us as a watermark church and for those of us that are individuals that we won't just be hot and serving you faithfully and wonderfully for a year or two five years ten years but

God that for the decades of our life year in and year out whether we are promoted to the highest ranks of the land or whether we are facing the challenges of life God our life will be looking to you may the testimony of our lives be like Darius to Daniel we are those who throughout our lives have continually served you the living God God we pray won't you help us give us faith where this is hard help us to trust you where we've given up hope Christ where our faith is dwindling we ask you to

help us in your awesome and your wonderful name Amen