

## Handling Change

Daniel 6:1-28, Romans 8:31-39

### **Slide 1**

As I look around at everyone here, both young and old, I can imagine the changes you've seen in your lifetime.

From life in the iconic 1950's, through the advent of the computer age. And regardless, if you're an adult, children look at you as being old.

Growing up, I remember having one rotary telephone in the house, located in a niche in the hallway, and only two channels available on our black and white television.

Now, look at today, not only have things changed, change is relentless and the pace of change is increasing.

The first American newspaper was published in Boston, in 1690. It was called, "*Publik Occurrences, Both Forreign and Domestick.*"

It was only 4 pages, and the editors said it would be published monthly, "*or if any Glut of Occurrences happen, oftener.*"

These days we listen to the news on the radio, watch it on television, or view it on our smartphones.

But change doesn't just happen in our little corner of the world here in Fort Worth, change happens around the world, and it affects us, too.

Global change like war, pandemics, economic recession, political and social upheaval. This doesn't count the changes we have to deal with in our personal lives.

Things like illness, tragedy, family struggles, new stages of life, and aging. So, what do we need to handle these changes that life brings?

These past few weeks, we've been following Daniel in his journey through life and the many changes he experienced in his 80 years.

He grew up in a royal family in Jerusalem, until the Babylonians took all the royals into exile. He was trained as a lowly intern in Babylon, studying the Babylonian language, culture, and religion.

Then one day, he was called to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream and suddenly he found himself elevated to a high position in the court.

He saw a king go insane, his friends thrown into a fiery furnace, and his status slowly fade, until Belshazzar called upon him to read the writing on the wall.

Again, he was elevated to a high position in the kingdom only to see the city overrun by the Medes and Persians.

Yet, when change came, Daniel always landed on his feet. What did Daniel have that allowed him to handle change?

Daniel had character, commitment, and faith. So, let's first examine Daniel's character.

## **Slide 2**

*Daniel 6:1-5, "It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. Now 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. At 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."*

*Finally 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.”*

Character goes with you throughout your life. You go off to college or the military, and you face questions like: *“Who are you? What group are you with? What are your moral values?”*

Where do you take a stand? How you answer these questions define who you are?

In the workplace, in marriage, in the lifestyle you choose what’s important to you; what are the non-negotiables?

Then retirement comes. Your character continues to define you, though your life seems so different. Who are you? What group do you align yourself?

What are your values, not only in personal life, but in care for other people and the world around you?

If you live long enough, some of your faculties may fade. However, some say that old people become what they always were, only more so.

If they were upbeat and sensitive, they’re more upbeat and sensitive. If they were self-centered and critical, they’re more self-centered and critical.

Character is built throughout life, brick by brick. Daniel demonstrated how that worked.

When he was offered food and wine offered to idols, he took a stand for who he was: a Jew, who would not go against his beliefs.

When God revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel in the night, he refused to take credit for his wisdom, but praised God.

When the interpretation of a second dream was revealed to him, he courageously spoke the truth to Nebuchadnezzar, risking his life to speak truth to power.

When Belshazzar tried to buy his services by offering a gold chain and high position, Daniel politely told the king he could keep his gifts.

Now, that he's the administrator of a third of the Persian empire, he's like he always was, only more so. No one can find even a hint of corruption or negligence in him.

Character is built over time, brick by brick, by the choices we make. That first month of college and the chance to cheat on a test; or the ethical dilemma we faced at work.

The hard times and our response of either resignation or hope. But can bad character be changed? Yes, it's possible to significantly change our character.

In Ephesians 4:18-24, Paul talks to people who were once *"in the futility of their thinking...darkened in their understanding in ignorance due to the hardening of their hearts...Having lost all sensitivity, they given over to sensuality...full of greed."*

To them, he said, *"...put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; be made new in the attitude of your minds; and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."*

Character can be changed, through Christ. Now is the time to make the changes that'll carry you through the rest of your life.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 tells us to, “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come...” So, when change comes, you’ll have to rely on the character you’re building today.

A second way Daniel handled change was with commitment.

### **Slide 3**

*Daniel 6:6-10, “So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: “May King Darius live forever! 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. 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.” So King Darius put the decree in writing. Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”*

Why did Daniel pray on his knees, three times a day, facing Jerusalem? It wasn’t for show although others saw what he did.

He was reminding himself who he was, and Whose he was. Not a Persian nobleman or an exceptional bureaucrat, but one of God’s chosen people.

He made a lifetime commitment to live as a child of God, and he sealed that commitment three times every day in prayer.

When we make commitments, we’re anchoring ourselves against the winds of change. A commitment to worship every week, or a personal devotional time, reminds us that God comes first.

A commitment to healthy habits makes us strong for the next stages of life. A commitment in marriage vows provides security as challenges come and life gets complicated.

A commitment to serve God, in whatever way He calls, makes life meaningful into retirement and old age.

Commitment helps Christian parents keep their priorities aligned when life gets busy and other activities are more pressing.

Finally, the last way Daniel handled change was by faith.

#### **Slide 4**

*Daniel 6:16-17, “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!” A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel’s situation might not be changed.”*

As the door was shut on Daniel in the lion’s den, we can only guess what went through his mind. His faith, however, was not based on wishful thinking, but on God’s faithfulness.

The lions were real, and our lions are real, even if they don’t have four paws. Our lions might be people who’re hungry to destroy us.

*Psalm 57:4 says, “I am in the midst of lions; I am forced to dwell among ravenous beasts—men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.”*

Our lions are liars, detractors, rumor-mongers, and rivals. Other lions might be war, natural disasters, terminal illness, or an untimely death of one we can’t imagine living without.

In Isaiah 7:9, the enemies of Judah are massed outside the walls, ready to attack, and King Ahaz and all the people are shaking with fear.

Isaiah prophesied to Ahaz, saying, *“If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”* In other words, if you lose your nerve, you’re doomed.

Sometimes we need to hear that message from God. A parent, struggling with a teen, needs to persevere in their resolve. A person stricken with cancer needs to hang on to God’s goodness.

A couple struggling in their marriage needs to stand firm in their commitment, fighting to get it right, and trusting in the God of miracles.

A person facing death can do nothing except trust in the God who has been with them whenever they turned to Him.

Now, Daniel’s story ends well. Not only was he protected from the lions, but his enemies fell prey to the trap they laid for him.

Darius praised God, and Daniel continued to prosper even into the reign of King Cyrus.

## **Slide 5**

### Conclusion

I wish I could say that if we have enough faith, we’ll always have a happy ending, but that’s not true, as many martyrs have shown.

Instead, our faith is rewarded by a greater guarantee, for the end of our story will vindicate our faith.

Paul put it so well in Romans 8:31-39, *“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He*

*who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Change will come; some good, some not so good. If we place our trust in Jesus, the One Who raised Christ from the dead will also deliver us.