

Steadfast Faith in a Changing World

Introduction: Daniel 1:1-7

We are going to look at the books of Daniel and Esther, who experienced what it was to live as people of faith in exile – which is what we must do. They are good examples because they did so without compromising their faith but at the same time served their communities and societies. However, they are not the heroes of their stories – God is. The same will be true for us.

Their stories are also relevant when our lives change dramatically because of circumstances outside of our control. How can we walk with God when that happens?

Faith in Exile - Then

Daniel's story begins with an account Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem. The fall of Jerusalem and the exile that followed was as a result of Judah's sin. Exile was the ultimate curse for failure to keep God's covenant. The prophets had warned the people of this, but they had not listened. It's the danger of moral complacency and spiritual pride.

The events of exile would have been deeply traumatic for people like Daniel who experienced it. Yet their faith shone. How come? That is what we will be looking at over the next few weeks.

Faith in Exile - Now

Increasingly we, as Christians, find ourselves in a position of exile. In the West there is a growing separation of faith and public life, where the Christian faith is pushed to the margins. This is driven by pluralism, secularism, and political correctness. Given the direction of travel of our societies it is increasingly difficult to walk the other way. Like Daniel and his friends, we are living in a world where the old certainties are gone. This has multiple causes. Our failure to live differently has contributed to our lack of spiritual power. However, Christ came and died for people like us. At the cross, he experienced exile on our behalf. And just as he promised the Jewish exiles, he is working everything for our ultimate good. It is faith in this sovereign God that can enable us to live in a changing world.

Three Different Reactions

We face three options: we withdraw from the world, we assimilate and are lost to the world, or we become missional. In the light of Jesus' death and resurrection we must choose the third. We must live as God's people have always lived – as strangers in the world, calling people into God's kingdom.