

THE BIG IDEA: Being full of the _____ frees us from the fear of _____.

1. Daniel was full of the _____

2. Daniel wasn't afraid to _____



The Take-Off

We're continuing in our series "No Matter What" and basically a series at The Gathering is when I give you a sentence or a key idea that sums up everything I'm going to say for the few weeks after that.

So basically, you could just learn that one idea and you'd have the gist of what the series is all about, but we take some time each week to unpack that idea a little bit more and that makes it a series.

If you follow me or the church or people who attend here on social networks like Twitter or Facebook, you may see - or have seen - a hashtag with the words "nomatterwhat" after it and wondered what that's all about. It's just a way for us to easily identify on those mediums what God is teaching us through this series.

Here's **THE BIG IDEA** for the entire series. Literally, if you remember nothing over the next few weeks, you'll be good if you remember this: **WE CAN STAND NO MATTER WHAT WHEN WE KNOW WHO MATTERS MOST**

Last week we looked at how the people we associate with can either help us stand or help us fall - that following the right person leads us to the right place - and we learned that the only right person to follow is Jesus

Standing no matter what is always about WHO we're standing with more than WHAT we're standing against, and when we stand with Jesus He takes us where He's been and where He is

If you were here, you'll remember me talking about being tethered to Jesus - like a bungee cord - and so no matter what we may go through here in this life, we know that we are only going through it on the way to victory because 1 Cor. 15:57 says that Jesus always leads us to victory and John 14:3 assures us that where He is is where we'll be

If you remember, I said last week that we would all love and hate this series, because at some point standing NO MATTER WHAT means that we're facing hard times, and no one likes those times

Today, we're going to look at Daniel and see how he responded to some pretty intense persecution

Before I tell you the big idea for today, let's agree on a simple premise: when we're attacked, we tend to circle the wagons and withdraw. Our first reaction is to protect ourselves, and while that's understandable, it's not Biblical.

The Biblical response to persecution is to extend the gospel even further out, and in order to do that we need to have quite a bit of internal power. That's what we'll see in Daniel's life this morning.

We'll see that being full of the right power frees us from the fear of going public.

Let's see how that simple principle played out in one of the most re-told stories from the life of Daniel:

1. Daniel was full of the right power

Let's play a little word association: What pops into your mind when I say "distinguished?"

Most of us might think of a certain look, clean, neatly-trimmed, dressed to the 9s

Maybe you picture people like the ones on the screen behind me.

The point here is that we tend to think something on the outside distinguishes us - the clothes, the gray, the gray beard, but this last picture proves that isn't the case! (Queen with gray beard)

But let's dig a bit deeper and see exactly what distinguished Daniel

First, what does it mean that he was distinguished?

- The word comes from a root Hebrew word that means "preeminent or enduring"

- Preeminent means "having paramount rank"

- When the Bible says that Daniel distinguished himself, it means that there was something about him that seemed that it would last, there was an enduring quality, like fine china

- He wasn't disposable, and that's impressive in today's "use it and throw it out" culture

The question, though, is why did he seem to stand head and shoulders above the crowd? What distinguished him?

The answer is in the same verse: it was something in him. Not his clothes, his diet, his actions - all those contributed to help him stand out, but what was in him that made him stand out?

An extraordinary spirit! (v. 3) Not surprisingly, the Hebrew word for this spirit means the same as the word for distinguished: "preeminent, surpassing"

In other words, Daniel had a spirit of excellence - a holy spirit - in him that set him apart or distinguished him from the others around him

Basically, there was something different ABOUT Daniel because there was something different IN Daniel.

Sound familiar? It's what we have as believers in Christ. The Holy Spirit - the most excellent Spirit - sanctifies us (sets us apart, distinguishes us) from those around us. (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Cor. 6:11)

Daniel was full of the right power, and so are each one of us who are following Jesus

And if you keep reading verse 3, you'll find that one of the results of Daniel being full of the right power - being distinguished from everyone else - is that he was up for a promotion.

So far, so good, right? And like most Biblical stories, this one would have been great if it had just ended there. But just like being full of the right power made him a target for promotion, it also made him a target for persecution.

Verse 4 shows the beginning of an “ABD” plan - “Anybody But Daniel” - to make sure he is taken out. I want to make sure that you get this: being set apart by the Holy Spirit makes you a target, period. Sometimes for promotion (and those are awesome times) and sometimes for persecution (and those aren’t so awesome times).’ Don’t be surprised by it. This is what Jesus was talking about in John 15:18-20. Like we learned last week, if we’re tethered to Jesus, we’ll go where He went, and persecution by people is one of those place. The question is what we’ll do when it happens. Let’s see how Daniel responded.

2. Daniel wasn’t afraid to go public

Remember what we said at the very beginning about how most of us naturally respond to hard times? We withdraw, we don’t ask for help, we pull the curtains and close the blinds and hope for it to pass.

But Daniel did something different. He wasn’t afraid to go public.

When so many of us would be tempted to close the curtains, Daniel went home and opened the windows to pray. The men found him praying, which means that they knew when they would find him in prayer because he didn’t deviate a minute from what he had been doing all along.

His response to the persecution? Bring it!

Not in rebellion, but in resolution. He continued NO MATTER WHAT.

He prayed NO MATTER WHAT his enemies said. He believed NO MATTER WHAT the lions sounded like. No flinching, no fear of going public NO MATTER WHAT the outcome.

His actions are a great picture of what we’re called to do in the face of persecution:

Ephesians 6:13 - Arm yourself - fill yourself with the right power - so that you can stand NO MATTER WHAT.

1 Peter 2:12 - Because we’re set apart (vv. 9-11), we live differently among the ones who could persecute us

And the result? GOD IS PRAISED by the very ones who persecuted you!

- 1 Peter 2:12 - “though they accuse you of doing wrong, **they may see your good deeds and glorify God**”

- Daniel 6:25-27 - written by the same man who had thrown Daniel in with the lions

The Landing

- What does it all mean for us?
- It means the same thing it did for Daniel: being full of the right power frees us from the fear of going public
- So, if you’re up against it and struggling to live with a NO MATTER WHAT attitude, the first step for you is to get full of the right power, and we’re going to pray for you this morning to be full of His Spirit
- Of course that’s not enough. It’s a great start, but even the king recognized consistency in Daniel (in vv. 16 and 20 he says “whom you serve continuously”). Remember one of the meanings of “distinguished?” Enduring. Being full of the right power is an ongoing, daily discipline.
- And it leads to an unashamed, bold public faith. Not obnoxious, but not hidden under a bowl as Jesus put it in Matthew 5:15.
- So, how do you go public? It’s so much more than just handing someone a tract or telling them how they’re living wrong. Pray for someone when they ask, not when you get home. Invite someone to come to church with you next week. Don’t be afraid to share your story with someone who really needs the grace found in it.
- When you’re filled with the right power, you’ll be free from the fear of going public.
- It helped Daniel stand NO MATTER WHAT, and it’ll help you do the same.