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# An Extraordinary Spirit

**Daniel 6:1-28**

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In our last week in the study of Titus, Bryan mentioned the fact that the mission of the church is to perpetuate the Kingdom of God from generation to generation; that we are to, by entering into this relationship with Christ, proclaim His Kingdom, live out His Kingdom values, and pass it on from generation to generation. We talked a few weeks ago about how that plays out in the family.

One of the important questions to ask is how does that actually play out in your life and my life in a day-in and day-out basis where we spend most of our time, and the place where we spend two-thirds of our waking life is in our work. Two-thirds of our waking time is spent at work. So there has to be some connection between this mission of perpetuating the Kingdom and our work-life or we're really limited in how we can live that out. We only have another third of our life to give to this mission, so it has to connect in some way. And we believe very strongly that it does. That's why a year ago right now we were in the middle of a six-week series on work, much like the family series we did this year, and we launched at that time a work-life ministry that's really meant to be a resource to the entire congregation to help with the kinds of issues and challenges and questions of living out this Kingdom message in a work environment.

Most of what we provided in this ministry is just by way of resources. If you go to our church website, and you'll see here on the screen, you'll go to *Ministries*. You come down to *Work-life* and you'll see a screen like this, and there are several buttons that you can push there. One of them is *Resources*, and if you click on that button there will be another series of options for you under *Tools* and *Coaching* and *Sermons* and *Devotionals*, the classes that we offer. There is one that's offered this morning. We offer some events from time to time. We're going to do a forum on the number one issue that people in our church have identified as a challenge for them, and that is balancing work and life all together. And then we also have a weekly email that you can sign up for that's just a way of encouragement to you. It comes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and there is a sample of it right there. You can also take an assessment of your own work-life and kind of identify maybe the points where things are not the way they should be and where some changes need to be made. There's about 900 people from our congregation that get that weekly encouragement email related to their work. If you'd like to sign up for that, you can just go on line and do that.

One of the questions is how do I really live the Kingdom in the workplace? I think there are three basic approaches that people have towards their work-life that relates to their relationship with God. One would be that I would call Monday Morning atheist. That is, there really is no connection between God and work. God is just not even considered. Work is work. Business is business. And there's not even an awareness for a lot of people for how these two might be connected. I mean we just go about doing our work and living in the work world in a way that everybody around us does without even thinking about what the connection might be to what God might want for that and the Kingdom.

Now we would like to hope that most of the people who fall into that category would be people who really don't have a relationship with God, that are really disconnected from God, and that makes sense. Why would God be invited into that part of their life? He's not invited into the

rest of their life? But I think sadly there's a lot of Christians who also neatly tuck God back on the shelf with their Bible after Sunday and just go into their work week as sort of a Monday morning atheist. They just don't really seriously consider the connection and the relevance of God to their work-life. That may be intentional on the part of some because, frankly, when I follow Jesus into my work-life, He actually may mess around with it just a little bit. He may speak into it. He may ask me to change some things. He may call me to something a little different than the way I normally do my work, and so perhaps intentionally I just sort of say, "You know, it's a little safer to leave God on the shelf. It's easier just to put the hound of heaven in His kennel and leave Him there for the week."

Others very unwittingly just have not yet made the connection that God is vitally interested in our work -life. He wants to go there. He's already there. He's already working. He has something significant to do. And so maybe for you that's just an awakening of that awareness that God really wants to be a part of that.

There's a second view, I think, of work and that is what we would call just a legalistic religious view of work, and that is that perhaps, just like in the rest of a legalist's life, you have certain rules that you follow, do's and don't's, that there are many followers of Christ, or people who claim to be who have sort of a list of rules of things that you should and shouldn't do in your work-life. But it's fairly narrow, it's fairly limited. It's the kind of stuff that we can pull off in our own flesh. We don't cheat. You know, we leave Christian magazines in the lobby. We have a few things here that sort of identify us as sort of Christian, but it really doesn't go to the heart. It isn't a very deep involvement of God in our work-life.

There's a third view that I think is the biblical view. It fits the view that we talk about here related to every aspect of our life, and that is a spirit-infused, Kingdom-oriented work-life, and that's what I think God really calls us to do. No matter what circumstance, no matter what our job environment is, whether it's a factory or a business we own or a hospital where we work or a home business, or whatever that is, wherever it is that we work, I think what God is calling us to as He is in every area of our life, is that we would live truth in that environment. We'd have a God-sized, Kingdom-sized vision and invite Him to be a part of every single moment of every single day and fully allow Him to engage us in what He's doing even in our work environment.

Now one of the questions we have when you hear that is, you think, are there any good examples of somebody who does that? I think there are a lot of good examples of people in this congregation who do that. I hope if you're hungry to meet one you'll find one, and maybe we can connect you up with some. I think there are some people who have a very good Kingdom-sized vision for their work-life. But there are some great biblical examples both on the negative and the positive, and we want to take just a 30-minute timeout from our Titus study to look at an example of really what Bryan was talking about last week—living the truth but living it out in the workplace. So if you have your Bibles, turn with us to the book of Daniel in the Old Testament. If you find Isaiah, which is the largest of the prophets, go to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and then the little book of Daniel. We're going to look at Chapter 6 this morning, so turn to Chapter 6.

Now here's just a little bit about Daniel and this book. This book is basically divided into two halves. The first six Chapters tell of several stories from Daniel's life and they are all set in the work environment. In fact, we really don't know much, if anything, about Daniel's family,

whether he had one. We don't know what his life was like apart from his work. All of these stories in each of these first six Chapters relate to Daniel and his friends and what was happening in the work environment. It really is probably one of the finest examples of what it would look like for us to live a Kingdom-sized vision in our work-life. The last six Chapters of the book are Daniel's prophecies that relate to future things. Most of those were probably written toward the end of his life, and he wrote those things down and people studied those things, and it's a part of what we think about the future today.

Now just a little bit of background again on Daniel and what we're going to be reading here. If you read in Chapter 1 of Daniel, you'll find that in 606 BC Nebuchadnezzar came and seized the city of Jerusalem and carried off a number of the royal family and folks and took them back to Babylon, and they looked among those captives for the finest young people they could find. And the intent that Nebuchadnezzar had would be to grab those young people and bring them into his own service that he would make them a part of his royal courts. Daniel happened to be one of them. In Chapter 1 it says that he was a youth, that he, along with a number of youths, were taken from their homeland and carried into captivity.

Daniel came out of an environment even as a part of probably one of the royal families in Judah at a time when the people of God were disobedient and were under the judgment of God, and so Daniel no doubt grew up in a family where there was a lot of evil being done because it was the very evil of the kings that brought the judgment of God, that brought the attack of the Babylonians onto these people. So it's a marvel that Daniel, coming out of that very dysfunctional and disobedient kind of environment was actually a young man in his teens who was devoted to God. We find that very early on, Daniel had a very raw but real faith, and he was pursing God with his whole heart.

It also tells us that he was endowed with a number of natural abilities. It says he was good looking, he was intelligent, and he had wisdom and knowledge about a lot of things. In other words, he was well suited for what God was going to put him in. This wasn't a career choice he made. He was carried off into captivity, but he was well suited for what God placed him into, and so we have that here.

In addition to that, it says God, because of Daniel's heart, infused even more knowledge and understanding and discernment into Daniel in his friends, that they stood out as ten times better than all of the other youths who were being trained in the king's court. They were outstanding, and it was noted from the very beginning of this book in the first Chapter, the first story, that that was attributed to the presence of God in their life. Now because of their devotion to God, God had infused His very life and presence and power into their life, and that marked them in a very, very special way.

Now when we come to this sixth episode in Daniel's life, we are many, many years later. Daniel is now, and I don't know if we often think of the story in this context, he's somewhere between 80 and 90 years old. Chapter 1 he's 17 to 20. Here he's 80 to 90. So for 72 years we know that Daniel served in his career. He had a 72-year career—not even just lived to 72, but he served under five different kings and emperors over a 72-year period. This is a man who lived in the trenches and reality of work for an entire lifetime, and I think we need to understand that as we enter into this particular account in Chapter 6. Chapter 6, verse 1:

> **It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the Kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole Kingdom, and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss.** (*NASB, Daniel 6:1)

Now Darius had just risen to rule over a part of the Persian Empire now, and Daniel is chosen along with a number of others to be a part of his government. Again, Daniel was well respected as you can see in verse 3.

> **Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire Kingdom.**

Now this phrase that he "possessed an extraordinary spirit" occurs in one form or another about six or seven times here in these opening six episodes of the book of Daniel. It was noted by everyone around him that Daniel was different, that of all the other rulers, all the other magicians, all the other people in the king's court, there was something different about Daniel. He possessed an extraordinary spirit. It meant an excellent or a superb spirit—that's what extraordinary means—and the spirit refers really to his inner being, the core of who he was. We would say he had an excellent heart or a character or attitude. It was that Daniel, at the very core of who he was, possessed an extraordinary spirit, and interestingly enough, down through all of these stories over these 70 years that Daniel had served, whenever this is mentioned it's always attributed to his relationship with his God. And the kings and the queens and the people who he served with always said there's something different about Daniel, and it's the spirit of His God that's within him.

Daniel was not something on his own. He certainly had been given his God-given talents and abilities. But what set him apart was the very presence of God and the power of God unleashed in his life because he was so devoted to and had an undivided heart towards God. And with that undivided heart and love for God, his life was infused with the spirit of God. He was spirit led. He was spirit filled, and that was noted by everyone in the work environment around him. Even in this very high pressure, high influence kind of environment there was something unique and different about Daniel.

Now I understand that for most of us here this morning we will not probably serve in the court of an emperor or a king or a president. We may not attain to that kind of a high level position. But the reality is that if you know Christ and He dwells within your heart, then you possess the very same spirit that Daniel possessed. That's the spirit that lives in you and me. The question is, am I going to allow Him to lead? Am I going to be a devoted follower? Am I going to have an undivided heart where my singular passion day-in and day-out is to know God and to make Him known and to allow God to direct every single thing that I do in every area of my life including everything that happens in my work-life? I don't flip an off switch and put God on the shelf and say, "Well, Spirit, stay out of this area," and then I take over, which a lot of times we do in our work-life. But what set Daniel apart and allowed him to have the influence that we're going to read about here is the fact that he walked with God, as we'll see. Verse 4:

> **Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.**

Just a reminder here in verse 4 that oftentimes the workplace is a hostile environment. Daniel, I think, would have said, "Here's racism." Here are the Persians that conquered the Kingdom, and all of these leaders, where this is their moment, this is their time, this is the time for them to rise up to power; and here's this exile from Judah, here's this Israelite, and the king has given him a position over them. And they didn't like it one single bit, and they thought of everything they could do to tear him down, to get him out of the way. That isn't the first kind of difficulty Daniel faced over the course of his 70-year career. No, in fact he confronted death and difficult circumstances again and again and again. You can read about them in the first six Chapters. I mean he worked in a performance-driven environment as we've talked about. I mean this is a dog-eat-dog political world that Daniel lived in.

If you go back to Chapter 2, King Nebuchadnezzar early in Daniel's life had a dream, and he called in all of the sorcerers and the magicians and everybody and he said, "Hey, I not only want you to interpret the dream, I want you to tell me the dream that I dreamed. I've forgotten it." And he says, "By the way, if you can't tell me the dream and the interpretation, then I'm going to tear you limb from limb and level your houses as rubbish. By the way, if you do tell me the dream, I'm going to give you riches and honor and a high place in my Kingdom." Now how many of you have faced that kind of thing at work? You know, the boss says, "Either you come up with the answer, and if you don't you're dead; or if you do I'm going to make you executive vice president of the company." I mean that is a high-pressure, high-performance environment. Daniel lived well. He lived well and maintained his relationship with God through 70 years of that kind of environment, including this where there's a group of his closest associates who are trying to find a way to eliminate him and get him out of the way. And yet Daniel just continually pressed on.

What's interesting is these men tried to find a way to get him out of the way. They ran straight on to his spotless character that again was a result of the presence of God in his life. Notice three things about him. He was faithful. That means he was trustworthy. Daniel had not done one thing over the course of his career that would be considered untrustworthy. They couldn't find any accusation to make against his trustworthiness. They also said there was no negligence. In other words, he was diligent to do every single thing that was required of him. They couldn't find over a 70-year career a single thing that they could point to and say, "Ahh…you neglected to do that." Completely diligent in all of his work.

And then it says, "*and no corruption"*. Now again, this is a very corrupt environment. I mean you think Washington is corrupt. This is way more corrupt than anything we've ever known—highly politically charged. And in all of that honest, trustworthiness, never did Daniel allow corruption to taint his life. That's the kind of man he was. And so they basically gave up on trying to find it related to his work. Verse 5:

> **Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."**

In other words, what they're saying is, "We're going to have to set up a scenario that will pit Daniel's loyalty to his God against his loyalty to the king. Only in that will we ever be able to catch him." Because they knew that Daniel would follow his God first and foremost above everything else. But even in the midst of Daniel's following his God with his whole heart, it never caused him to shirk his responsibilities and duties in the earthly Kingdom. He was exemplary there even as he, with an undivided heart, pursued his God. Verse 6:

**Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever! All the commissioners of the Kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den. Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.**

And they go on to talk about how to seek to persuade him. Now I suppose it made sense to Darius because he's new to the throne and he's trying to establish his authority, so this probably sounded on some sort of level that it was probably a pretty good idea that everything for the next 30 days would be focused on him, and that would really establish his sovereignty over his country. But there was a lie and there was conspiracy at work here. They didn't tell the truth. It wasn't all of them that had come to this agreement. Daniel certainly wasn't a part of that, and so they basically trapped the king into signing this injunction that said for the next 30 days no one is to pray to any other god or petition any other man except for this new King Darius. Verse 10:

**Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.**

This isn't something new or different Daniel did in face of this potential. He wasn't sort of saying, "Well, hey, I'm just going to make a big show of my devotion to God." No, what Daniel did, even knowing this injunction had been signed, is just to continue on in the rhythm of his life, which was just to walk with God every single day, and he had established a pattern and a rhythm in his relationship with God that three times a day he knelt to give thanks and to pray and invite God into his life and to listen to God, and that was the pattern of his life. And even in the face of this death threat, he continued to pursue God regularly, passionately, daily. It was the mark of his life. It was what Daniel was all about. This was where the strength of the extraordinary spirit came from his daily walk with God, his invitation to God to be a part of every facet of his life.

Well, verses 11 through 13, of course the conspirators discover and find out about this and they bring it to the attention of the king. Verse 14 then gives us the king's response to finding out about the fact that they caught Daniel disobeying this ill-advised law.

**Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him. Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed."**

I think the important thing to see in these verses is that the king was deeply disturbed that he had allowed this to happen. And why was that? Because he had such a deep respect for Daniel. He had a relationship with Daniel. Daniel is noted throughout these first six Chapters as someone who showed wisdom and tact, and he honored these kings. Even though they were pagan kings, even

though they had ruined his homeland, he showed honor and respect and had tact and wisdom relationally with his superiors and with all of those around him. And that had endeared him to the king, and the king was sick that this injunction had ever been signed and that there was no way out of it.

So verse 16, the order was given. Daniel was brought in and cast into the lion's den, and the king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you." The king bears witness to Daniel's God because it's so evident in Daniel's life. The king says, "Your God is the one who will rescue you." Verse 18:

> **Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him. Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den.**

The king was so disturbed that he spent a sleepless night wondering, hoping that Daniel would be rescued out of this death situation.

Verses 20 through 23 we see this dialogue that happened at the lion's den between the king and Daniel the next morning.

> **When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?" Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime." Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.**

What an amazing thing that this pagan king got a taste of Daniel's god and of this Kingdom that Daniel's God rules over. What a different Kingdom. It's a Kingdom that's ruled by the love and grace of Daniel's God. And He spared Daniel's life because Daniel was innocent, and it was an incredible testimony, not by Daniel's words, but by Daniel's life. He was living truth, as we talked about last week in Titus, in such a way that this king was attracted to, drawn to, and got a taste of the Kingdom of God and the God who rules. It's an amazing thing. Verse 24:

> **The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.**

And then verse 25, the closing part of this Chapter, is really a remarkable thing that I think again speaks to us in our work setting.

> **Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound! I make a decree that in all the dominion of my Kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God and enduring forever, and His Kingdom is one which will not be**

**destroyed, and His dominion will be forever. He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."**

Isn't that amazing? Daniel never said a word. Daniel lived truth over the course of 70 years, and this is the third time now in the book of Daniel where the king, the pagan king is the one who declares the message to his Kingdom. Daniel lived truth and the pagan kings around him proclaimed the truth, and they said what Daniel could never have said. The king said, "Hey, listen! Follow! Consider this God of Daniel. This is the true God. This is the God who saves. This is the God who rescues. This is the God of glory and might and power. Listen and follow Him!" From the mouth of a pagan king.

I think there's a very direct correlation between that and your work-life and mine. That is that we should live in such a way, inviting the spirit of God to be a part of our work in such a way that we're so marked by His presence, by His character, by His wisdom, that our life speaks, it draws and attracts people. And others will be the ones who say, "Hey, you've got to consider the God of this person or that person because that's the true God. Nobody could live the way they live without the fact that God is real in their life." That's the witness of living truth and Daniel did that over 70 plus years in a very difficult work situation.

You may have a difficult work situation yourself. You may try to think, "How can I get out of this thing?" I know a lot of people who think, "Gosh, I'd love to come and work at the church. You know, it'd be so much nicer than where I work." Well, just so you know, it's not all that nice sometimes here either. You know, there are challenges everywhere you go, but the reality is God has placed you there, and God is there because He lives within you, and He wants to speak through your life. He wants to empower you in such a way that you live the Kingdom values, you live the life of Jesus that others would see and be attracted to and know there is something very different about you, and then that God would step in on those occasions and show Himself strong on your behalf that others might recognize and see the hand of God and want to connect and know the God you serve, the God I serve.

Not only was God's name glorified and His Kingdom advanced repeatedly over the course of Daniel's life; in fact several of these kings actually repented and changed their ways as a result of Daniel's witness of his life; but notice at the very last verse of this chapter (verse 28):

**So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.**

In other words, not only was God's agenda advanced, but God also blessed Daniel and he enjoyed success.

Can you live successfully as a follower of Jesus and in the Kingdom of this world and do it well? Yes you can. You can be wholly devoted to Jesus Christ and still have an outstanding career and enjoy success there. What makes the difference is an undivided heart toward God, inviting Him into every single facet of your life, every moment of your workday.

Now there are six dramatic stories here in Daniel that happened over the course of 72 years. That means if these were spaced out evenly about every 12 years, some big miraculous thing happened in Daniel's life. That meant that most of the testimony of Daniel was in the day-to-day ordinary over

those many, many intervening years where day after day he walked with God, pursued God, allowed God's presence to dominate his work in such a way that his testimony was clear and profound, even in the most pagan and most difficult of work environments.

I ask you this morning, do you have a Kingdom-sized vision for your work-life? Do you see it as a primary environment where God wants to use you and work through you and proclaim truth by the way that you live? Do you see what God might want to be doing in and through your work-life? And do you realize that really it's the presence of the Spirit, it's God in you that's going to produce the influence? It's not you and me trying to be influential. It's the influence of the Spirit flowing through us that gives us influence, that changes people's hearts. And how is the Spirit evident? Really He's evident in our daily pursuit of Him in the daily ordinary things of life. It's where we invite God in every single day in the small things, not the big dramatic things, but in the day-to-day ordinariness of life where we so walk with God and trust Him that the Spirit is evident even in the most mundane and ordinary of tasks. And the Spirit is most unleashed, most able to have influence in and through us when we have an undivided heart, when we're just passionate more than anything else about following God, where we follow Jesus into our work-life with passion.

To those of you who are young, maybe you're a teenager, maybe you're in your twenties, I would just challenge you to be like Daniel, that early in his life he resolved to walk with God all the days of his life. He had a raw faith, but he was consistent from the very beginning. He was determined to walk with God in whatever environment he found himself. And because of that, over a lifetime he was able to have extraordinary influence that really continues 26 hundred years later. His life is still speaking.

Some of you who are older and may be thinking, "You know, my best days, the days of influence are gone; that was back then; I'm retired, I'm older." I love the story of the fact that Daniel, at 90, was still working, he was still serving, he was still going. He's got a freshness to his faith. He's still pursuing God with passion. It's as real and vital and a part of his life at 90 as it was at 17. And because of that, through five different emperors and two different empires, Daniel had witnessed, Daniel had influence. Daniel made a difference. And I believe that no matter what situation you find yourself in, God wants you to have that kind of influence in the environment where you are planted, wherever that may be.

*Our Father, I pray that we would see in Daniel a role model for us, for our work-life, and that the way he walked with You, sought You, listened to You, would permeate our hearts and minds. And we would be so filled and led by the Spirit that You would have a voice in our workplace, in our culture that would turn people's hearts around, exalt Your name and build Your Kingdom. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*