

Thriving in Babylon—Hope

Review:

- Our culture is Babylon but there have been worse Babylon's.
- People are thriving spiritually all over the world—so can we.
- What does it mean to thrive—to flourish—spiritually?

The timeline for Daniel and Shadrach Meshach and Abednego:

- Jeremiah and Habakkuk: God had warned Judah, but He had also told them to thrive while they wait.
- God made a promise that here will be a remnant, and God wins in the end (*Daniel revealed more details at the end of the book*).
- False teachers, or counterfeits, had come against Jeremiah.
- **Jeremiah 14:13-14; Jeremiah 29:4-7; Jeremiah 29:10-11.**

They learned to be thrivers from a thriving community!

- It was passed on by God's faith community—a thriving spiritual community leaves a legacy.

This week: They learned faith that led to **HOPE**.

- Where does it come from? Faith: believing God IS, and that He rewards those who diligently serve Him.
- Hope is not wishful thinking. It's like looking forward toward spring in North Idaho.
- Hope enables you to act humbly, act wisely, and be joyful.
- Attitude changes everything!

Hebrews 10:39 (NIV) But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

Romans 4:3 (NIV) What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Faith in what?

- God has a plan for the world, and He will accomplish it. He is in control of who is in control.
- God's power—He has the power to know the end from the beginning, and to use as tools those who do evil.
- God's heart—He loves us, sees us personally, and He says, "I know the plans I have for you." (**Jeremiah 19:11**)

Matthew 10:29-31 (NIV) ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. ³⁰And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

What did Daniel (and friends) learn in Judah/Jerusalem that they took to Babylon?

1. He knew the promises of Jeremiah. He wasn't caught by surprise when it happened.
 - He knew the Word.
 - He knew the stories of old—God's track record.
 - See **Habakkuk**.

2. Continuing spiritual community...

- Stand together.
- Remind one another of the God we serve and what He has done.
- Remind one another of what He promised to do.
- Be aware of the devils' methods, including isolation and looking at the circumstances rather than at God.

Daniel 2:49 (NIV) Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

3. Prayer

Daniel 2:17-19 (NIV) ¹⁷Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ¹⁸He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven.

Faith gave Daniel *hope* that leads to *courage* that leads to *humility*, *wisdom*, *thriving*, and *influence*.

Our desire is to be a thriving spiritual culture that produces thriving people.

Questions to Ponder:

1. Which of the scriptures stands out as new, fresh, or challenging to you? Come back to it throughout the week!
2. What is your biggest take-away from this sermon?
3. What is the result of hope in your life? (*Courage or lack thereof?*)
4. Examine whether your faith in God's plan, God's power, *and* God's heart is solid enough to give you world-proof hope. Pick one of the three to focus on this the week in your prayers, Bible reading, and discussions.
5. How can you help build a spiritual culture that produces thriving people? Do you know someone specific you can encourage?