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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Careless, Confident and Conspicuous

Daniel 2:24-27

Prayer: *Lord, I just again I pray for your word. We are just so thankful that you have given us your word. We again continue to pray that we as open it up you would give us the power and the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you might again enable us to make these words a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we're doing a story of Daniel and Daniel is a story of a believer moving from crisis to crisis. And we're currently studying crisis number two in Daniel's life. Daniel was taken as a prisoner from Jerusalem when it was overrun by the Babylonians. He was brought back to Babylon and educated in their language and customs, and at this point, he's now considered a wise man in Babylon having been instructed for years in Babylon's finest universities. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, has had a very troubling dream and he demands that the wise men not only tell him the interpretation of the dream but he wants the details as well. And when they prove themselves incapable, he becomes enraged. And

he sends out edict to have all of the wise men in Babylon killed. Daniel seeks out the fellowship of his fellow believers, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and together they come before God in prayer. God miraculously answers the prayer by providing all of the details of the dream as well as its interpretation. Daniel gives a great prayer of thanks that we looked at last week, and this week we pick up in the story of Daniel right after he's received from God the knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. This is Daniel 2:24-27. It says: *Therefore Daniel went into Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation."* Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: *"I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation."* The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, *"Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?"* Daniel answered the king and said, *"No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked."*

Well, we see Daniel doing what folks today like to call speaking truth to power. That phrase, that phrase was coined to demonstrate an attitude that is so brave and so confident that it's willing to

speaking whatever needs to be said to people in a position to respond in ways that could be harmful. Now today's version of speaking truth to power is a comedian willing to insult the president to his face. Years ago that was just considered rude and arrogant. Today that is considered brave and daring. Daniel practiced genuinely speaking truth to power because he spoke the truth to people who could literally tear him limb from limb. Daniel's fearlessness wasn't magical. It came from a deep faith that he had in God and Daniel's attitude can be catching if we let it. This morning I want to look at Daniel's faith as careless, as confident, and as conspicuous.

First of all, Daniel's faith was careless. I know that's largely a pejorative term today but I don't mean it that way at all. I mean it in the way suggested by *1 Peter 5* which says this, it says: *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.* Casting all your cares upon God conjures up for some an image of somebody who's just kind of skipping merrily along without a care in the world because, after all, he's cast his cares upon God. That's not what this verse is saying at all. Casting your cares means taking those things that are oppressing or terrifying you and committing them not to your hands, your cleverness or your luck, but to his sovereign will. And if you

think it's easy, you've obviously never tried it. Daniel had all -- had cast all of his cares upon God, quite frankly, because he had precious little in the way of other options. I mean, he was on the run; he was fearing for his life. You know, whenever we encounter someone in the news who's fleeing from the law, we always hear the inevitable plea that he would turn himself in. And we understand that if they do that, they have due process, they have a lawyer who will be appointed if they can't afford it and all of these other things that take place. Well, due process in Daniel's day consisted of being trapped down, captured and summarily executed on the spot. Nebuchadnezzar as a king was not known as a gentle man. This was a guy who punished another king who had rebelled against him by bringing his children in front of them and executing his children directly in front of him and then putting out his eyes so that the very last thing he would ever see is his children being butchered. Like I said, this was not a gentle man and he is after Daniel. And Daniel had every reason to have all of the cares of the world on his shoulders. The edict that had been given to Arioch was this one shouted by the king when the wise men of Babylon proved incapable of giving him the answer he wanted. This is what he said, he said: *"My decision is firm: If you do not make known the dream to me and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap."*

Well, considering the king and his appointed destroyer Arioch, the very last thing that you would imagine is precisely what Daniel did. I mean, our text opens with this statement in Daniel 2:24, it says: *Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon.* Well, what Daniel did went way beyond brave and daring, it moved firmly into the realm of what we consider careless. And why would Daniel give himself up so easily to Arioch, a man who's specifically sent to kill him? Well, if we apply the wisdom of 1 Peter, we can say that Daniel humbled himself under the mighty hand of God. See, Daniel did exactly what God would want us to do if we were in a crisis. First thing he does is he seeks out the fellowship of his fellow believers and then he and they go before God in prayer. Then he puts his faith completely in God's hands, knowing that if God didn't act, he would be just another trophy for Arioch and for Nebuchadnezzar.

So when you're in a crisis, there's some helpful things that we need to remember. And first and foremost is the important verse to remember whenever a crisis comes around. It's *Romans 8:28: And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.* You see, it's absolutely critical to remember that if you are a child of God, that every single event that takes place in your life has one

stated goal, one stated purpose, and it's stated in the very next verse. Verse 29: *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.* For a Christian in crisis, it is incredibly important to remember that there's no such thing as a random chance event. God has designed each of our lives so that the events of our lives all have the goal of shaping us uniquely into the image of Jesus Christ. God is using the events of our lives to grow Christ likeness in us, and a huge part of that is faith. Not just the faith of acknowledging Jesus as Lord and Savior but also the day in, day out faith of learning how to depend on God and obey him when things are not going well. It's going to inevitably involve stress and strife and struggle. Consider these words that God said about Jesus himself in *Hebrews 5:8*, he says: *Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.* In a perfect world, we would all recognize the incredible importance and value of faith and move effortlessly in the direction of growing that faith in our lives. Problem is we don't live in a perfect world. In this world we tend to run in the exact opposite direction. A life of faith is one in which circumstances and situations place you under his hand to be humbled and because you know, you know he is trustworthy, you place your care upon him. That's the theory part. That's what 1 Peter is clearly stating. The practice part comes about only by having to trust God over and over again by virtue of those circumstances and

then learn that he is absolutely trustworthy. And to do that, God is quite willing to use crisis. You know, that combination of danger and opportunity is often times the only thing that will lead us on a pathway to learning that God is trustworthy.

Let me put it to you this way: There's an illustration of faith I'm sure many of you have ever heard, you know, there's a little girl and she's standing right by the pool and there's dad, he's in the deep part of the pool and he's standing there he's saying, "Come on, honey, jump, come on!" And He's clapping his hands, "Daddy will catch you." And she's standing there and she's kind of paralyzed, hunched over, fearing, and she's having this big battle as to whether or not she can jump to daddy and whether or not she can overcome her fears. But what God is saying in crisis is that crisis specifically is her little brother taking that option away from her by sneaking up behind her and shoving her. God frequently uses the danger of crisis as an opportunity to push us into seeing how trustworthy he really is.

I mean, I've spoken many, many times about what I call the celestial bank account. And what I mean by that is this. I say we develop faith by seeing God actively interacting in our lives proving that he's not just some kind of religious theory but a real present father who genuinely loves us and leads us to follow in the

pathway of his son. I mean the only way that's going to happen is if we put ourselves in a position to see God at work in our lives or if God decides to take the initiative, and that almost never happens outside of struggle, difficulty, and yes, often times crisis. I mean, think about the last time that you saw God actively working in your life. Just try to imagine. When was the last time that you really sensed the presence of God? Was that a time of great joy and great blessing? It may well have been. Or was it a time when absolutely nothing is going on in your life and you're just going about the humdrum of every day living? That -- that I doubt. Or was it a time of crisis? In all likelihood it was. That is a thoroughly biblical pattern. Listen how David describes his meeting with God in Psalm 40. He says this: *I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.* Now you think David met God in joy and blessing? Again, certainly possible. It could have happened. Do you think that David met God in the humdrum of every day living, again a small possibility, or do you think he met him in the midst of a crisis? Well, I'll let you be the judge. David goes on to say in the next verse: *He drew me up in the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.* See, quite frankly the times when I have seen God most clearly in my life have been those times when I have been in the pit of destruction, those times when I have been stuck in the miry bog. There have been numerous

occasions when I have felt the presence of God to be so real that I could almost touch it, and it's almost always been in a time of crisis. I mean, we all know what times like those are. God usually has our undivided attention and when he responds, we know God on a level we had not known him on before. You know, it's a testimony to God's love and humility that he's willing to meet us when we finally run out of excuses to avoid him. Often times this is how God establishes a relationship with us. You see, every time you see God working specifically and directly in your life, you are basically making a deposit in your celestial bank account. David in Psalm 40 is drawing on that bank account and he's drawing on it from his past experience. He's crying out to God and he's waiting patiently because he knows intimately and by experience that this is a God who answers prayer. And when God draws him up from the pit of destruction, he's doing two things, he's not only rescuing David, he's also making another deposit in the account of experiences that David can look back on to know that God is trustworthy.

Am I saying that God puts crises in our lives sometimes to force us to turn to him? Yeah. I'm saying absolutely. I know in my case, I would have spent years and years like that little girl hunched over, paralyzed by fear, afraid to jump into my daddy's arms if God hadn't sent on more than one occasion a little brother to sneak up

behind me and just give me a shove. I mean, now you may be thinking what kind of God would do that? My answer would be a God who knows that we are so addicted to the comfort of our own safe choices that we seldom, if ever, will take that risk on our own. You know, there are some folks who are willing to enter into a crisis voluntarily. I mean there are missionaries, there are martyrs, there are that great cloud of witnesses that went before us. I'm not one of them. And I suspect that you are not as well. And the different crises that I have found myself in I would have never entered voluntarily. And it's only by virtue of being caught up repeatedly in crises I've never volunteered for that I began to see God as a practical reality rather than as a nice theoretical concept. In fact it was only through those circumstances that I began to see God as tangibly real and as someone that I could, like David, trust to get me out of this pit of destruction or miry bog, someone that I could then trust to enter into a crisis voluntarily with. And it's not just crises, I mean, I remember vividly as a new Christian, I remember we were in this church in California and we were the only young people and we were surrounded by people who were just ancient like us, I mean, that's all there was. We were the new people and we were young people. I remember sitting around talking with believers who have been believers for 30, 40 and 50 years and hearing them all say, speak about difficult times, heart rending times, and I would marvel about them. They were all saying

how good God was, how faithful God was, how trustworthy God was. I remember one dear saint who was so wracked with arthritis in her hands that when she prayed, virtually all of her fingers went almost 90 degrees to her palms, and I knew that she was incredibly wracked with pain constantly but she went on and on and on about God's goodness, and I remember thinking to myself, am I -- am I missing something here? I mean, here's a woman in obvious pain, she's struggling greatly, and she's thanking God. I don't get it. Well, fast forward 40 years. Now I find I'm one of the older people telling folks that no matter what circumstances you find yourself in, God is faithful, God is trustworthy, and God is good. And that's because I've been in the school of Romans 8:28 for enough years to know that God has a plan and a design for every single thing that happens in my life, the good, the bad, and the ugly. If the pattern we see in scripture is the pattern we see in the lives of God's children, it's for a purpose. And we know that pattern speaks to the fact that crisis is always an opportunity. Daniel didn't just stop in to pay Arioch a visit, I mean, he was forced by the crisis he was in to take a step that seemed altogether careless. I mean, the risk that he was taking was literally life threatening but he had placed his cares already on God. In Daniel's case he didn't have much choice. But I submit to you that often times that's precisely the point. That's why we have crises in our lives. If you really want to meet God, the

chances are good that you're going to meet him in a place that is very, very scary because faith almost always involves risk, and we seldom consider the risks involved in refusing to take a risk. It was Soren Kierkegaard who once said: "To dare is to lose one's footing momentarily. To not dare is to lose oneself." See, God was growing in Daniel a careless faith that was willing to risk certain death by approaching his appointed executioner. God was also growing a confident faith in Daniel. This is the next verse, it says: *Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went in and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation."* Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: *"I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation."*

See, Daniel's confidence was so persuasive to Arioch that even he was willing to take this enormous risk as well. I mean, notice how Arioch introduces Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, he says "I, I have found among the exiles from Judah a man." Let's give credit where credit is due, I mean, Arioch is a very brave man willing to take a very large risk not because of any particular attachment to faith or to God but because he sees in Daniel's confident faith someone that can make him look good. That was a huge risk. I mean,

imagine if Daniel had blown his opportunity, not only would his life been forfeited but I guarantee you Arioch's would as well, but Daniel's confident faith was not limited to just moving Arioch, it also included an astounding exchange that he has with the king. This is verse 26: *The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked."* You want to talk about speaking truth to power? This is absolute truth to absolute power at least on an earthly plane. Daniel's just repeated the very thing that the wise men had originally said to Nebuchadnezzar that caused him to go into a rage in the first place. Just to back up, at the beginning of the chapter, this is how it happened, this is Daniel 2:10, it says: *The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed.*

I think it's safe to say that at the point that Daniel stood there

before Nebuchadnezzar, he had placed all of his cares specifically before God, so he was virtually careless about his own personal fate. Secondly, he had been through enough crises to know that God was faithful. He had a celestial bank account and it was pretty full. I mean, it consisted first of all of the physical health that he remembered that God had granted them when they insisted on eating nothing but vegetables and water instead of the king's food. It was also full of the certain knowledge that God gave them about the very dream that Nebuchadnezzar had had and its interpretation. And so seeing God working, knowing that God was there present with him in his life gave Daniel the supreme confidence to act on his faith. And when he did so, he did it by making his faith conspicuous. This is *Daniel 2:26*, it says: *The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, but -- but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days."*

You see, careless faith comes about by placing our cares under the mighty hand of God. The very term "cares" speaks of concerns and fears and things that keep us up at night. For Daniel and his

companions, those cares were not just something that bothered them, they were literally matters of life and death. And yet we see they were so careless about their own personal safety that they once told Nebuchadnezzar that regardless of whether or not God was going to save them from the fiery furnace, they weren't going to worship this image that he had set up. That's the kind of carelessness that says no matter what happens, I'm not going to give up because I believe God is sovereignly in charge and he will get me through this. Well, Daniel is able to look at the worst possible outcome and say what *Philippians 4:13* says: *I can do all things through him who strengthens me*. That leads me to this question, can you say that? Can I say that? I mean, could you see why God would allow crises to come into your life so that he can begin the process of demonstrating to you that he is good, that he is faithful, that he is trustworthy. You know, chances are pretty good you're not going to volunteer to become careless when it comes to your faith. And chances are also pretty good that God will allow crises to come into your life at some point or another to show you a pathway to making him more than just a theory but a genuine practical reality. Careless faith is what produces confident faith. It's knowing you've been there and you've done that and that God has been there and done that with you. I mean, I don't know any other way for that to happen except through struggle. I mean when you go through those struggles and by the

grace of God you get lifted up out of that miry clay, it doesn't just affect you, it affects everyone around you.

And that leads to my third point. See, careless faith produces a confident faith that will inevitably become a conspicuous faith. Daniel is standing before Nebuchadnezzar, a man who could kill him in an instant. He's careless about his own fate, he's absolutely confident in what God has revealed to him that has him standing there right in front of Nebuchadnezzar, and finally Daniel makes his faith conspicuous. *Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show the king the mystery that the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days."* Daniel could not keep his faith in God to himself. I mean, what he's saying is no, Nebuchadnezzar, there's nobody in heaven or anywhere else that could answer your request, no, can't be done. But there's a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. That's conspicuous faith. See, when God brings you through a crisis, when he demonstrates how real he is to you, when he proves to you that he is absolutely trustworthy, you have no choice but to acknowledge him in everything that you do. And when you do that, you bring full circle the whole point of how and why God is growing faith in you, is to bring honor and glory to himself. *Matthew 5:14: "You are the light of the world. A city*

set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven."

See, conspicuous faith is a faith that moves others to glorify God. It's a faith that affects others by how it has affected you. As a parent it affects your family, as a member of the body of Christ it affects this whole community, as a friend it affects those you have maintained friendships with. See, when your faith is real, that reality gets translated all around you. Conversely, when it's not real, when the person that you are at home, at work, or at play is not the same person who is sitting here on a Sunday morning listening to a sermon, well, then no one will place any confidence in a faith that you don't place any confidence in as well.

I'm speaking with a pastor friend of mine about why it is that so many young people are leaving the church, and he had an interesting and disturbing take on that. He said in his view actually it was pretty simple, he said so many young people have never seen for themselves the theory of God which we so often speak about right here from the pulpit, they've never seen the theory of God translated into the practical realities of seeing the power of God

expressed in life. I mean, we all know the statistics for evangelicals are awful. We know there's virtually no difference in the way we live out the gospel and the way the world lives out its gospel. We get divorced just like the world does, we view porn just like the world does, we go after the world just like the world goes after itself, and we don't trust God just like the world doesn't trust God. And our kids, after asking ourselves what difference does our faith make in our lives conclude that it's not worth investing their lives in. I mean, if there's no real difference between a belief in Jesus Christ that has made a difference in your life as a husband or wife or mother or father, then why in the world would we expect it to make a difference in the lives of our kids? Daniel's fearlessness wasn't magic. I mean, it came from a deep faith that he had in God and Daniel's attitude can be catching if you let it be. We have the greatest story that's ever been told. God himself became a man and he lived out his life among us perfectly and he offered up that life in payment as full for our sins, and he calls us by faith to eternal life if we accept him as Savior and Lord. Most of us go for the Savior part, not quite as many the Lord part. But you know, God has a way of asserting His Lordship into the lives of his chosen ones whether we ask for it or not. I mean, we've seen this in the lives of the great saints that have all gone before us and we're examining how God is doing it in the life of Daniel, and it's

through crisis. The goal is conspicuous faith. It starts with a careless faith that becomes a confident faith as we see God move in us from crisis to crisis. Part of the purpose of conspicuous faith is to build up and encourage those around us. And part of the struggle the church I believe comes from not seeing fellow brothers and sisters being conspicuous in their faith. You know, if young people never see the difference that Jesus Christ makes in our lives, I really can't blame them for leaving. I mean, my only comfort is knowing that God is totally sovereign and Jesus said in *John 10: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."*

I want to conclude today with something a little different. I want to conclude with a video testimony that describes and puts on display exactly what conspicuous faith is. This is the embodiment of what I've been talking about and this taking place in the worst of possible circumstances. I know many of you have seen this video, it's been on Facebook. I think everyone needs to see this because this is exactly what conspicuous faith, a faith that understands Romans 8:28, this is what it looks like. And as painful as it is, I think you will be blessed by it. I first saw it on the Desiring God website, and I want to read to you how they introduce this video at first. The title of it was *What Would You*

Say If Your Wife Was Ripped Away? This is the intro. It says:
"Almost a year ago, Monty Williams was fired as the head coach of the New Orleans Pelicans two weeks after his team was eliminated from the NBA playoffs. Many thought he had done enough to keep the job, having just led his team to the playoffs for the first time in four years. Reporters asked Williams about the somewhat surprising firing. He responded by thanking the organization and the fans and then gave a reason for the surprising hope that was in him: 'God has always been in control of my life. Romans 8:28 is in my heart. All things work out for people who are called by Jesus Christ. God's brought me through too much to complain and be bitter.'

"Nine short months later, now an assistant coach with the Oklahoma City Thunder, Monty Williams found out last week that his 44-year-old wife had been killed in a head-on car accident. The other driver was driving 92 miles an hour in a 40-mile-an-hour zone when she crossed the center line and careened head-on into Ingrid Williams' SUV. Three of the children in the car with her each survived with serious injuries. A week later, Monty Williams stood over the body of his wife of 20 years and mother of their five children -- Lael, Faith, Janna, Elijah, and Micah -- and delivered this powerful seven-minute eulogy. Cue it. (video playing)

That's conspicuous was faith. That's what it looks like. And you

know, conspicuous faith is also contagious faith. Just before I left this morning, I was on the Internet, my brother who's really developed his faith now, it's become a very, very important part and he find himself in the middle of all these little Facebook battles with all of his friends who are not that really committed to faith and non-believers and he's getting it from all different sides and he's trying to argue, and I was thinking about it, I said, you know, you don't need to argue. Send them that clip. You want to see the power of the gospel? You want to see something that you're not going to be able to argue against? You want to see somebody step aside and let the Holy Spirit just speak? That's what Monty Williams did. I mean, we say confident faith produces a conspicuous faith which produces a contagious faith and I looked this morning, there was 10 million hits on this You Tube video. This horrible tragedy has broadcast the gospel around the world because he -- Monty allowed the Holy Spirit to use him. I believe he just stepped aside and let God do what he was going to do and I believe the power of that is self-evident. That's what we need to do when we are in crisis, when we are struggling, when we have all kinds of difficulty come into our lives. We've seen this, we saw Ken and Deb do this almost a year ago. They made their faith conspicuous having lost Hadassah. But this is where it becomes real, this is where people look at this and say, "I get it. There's something special about what you have that I don't have,"

and that's a power that you don't get just by arguing somebody into the kingdom. It's a power that has to be seen and felt and experienced. Every one of us has the option of having that kind of power, every one of us can walk with God in ways that enable us to make our faith conspicuous and contagious. We just have to be willing, A to voluntarily go into a crisis; and B, if we don't volunteer, to accept it when it's coming and to accept like Monty accepts what Romans 8:28 is trying to tell us, everything has a point, everything has a plan, everything has a purpose, we can trust God for that. Let's pray.

Father God, I just thank you for brother Monty, I thank you for in spite of the pain that he's obviously in, that his desire to share the power of the gospel is so overwhelming, that he is able to stand before crowds and just describe how good You are in the time of exquisite pain for him. That is power the world does not understand, it's power the world never, never sees, and it's power I am so grateful and thankful you let us see. I pray individually for each of us that we would have a tiny taste of that, that we would be willing to trust you, be willing to walk through whatever it is that you have for us, understanding that by your grace, by your power, you will get us through it and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.